LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

THE SON OF THE MOMENT

Nazir Ahmad (1836–1912), a profound scholar, a powerful orator and the pioneer of modern fiction in Urdu, still remains unique in discussing vital issues concerning man in society. With his keen sense of realism, power of description, flexible style and the loveliness of his characters, his works at once provide entertainment and insight. He is one of those writers who brought a renaissance in Indian literature and made Urdu the language of the rising middle class with all its ideals and aspirations. His discussions on intellect and religion, together with his analytical mind taking cognisance of the East-West encounter in India make this work a classic of great contemporary interest.

Mohammed Zakir was born in 1932 in Delhi and educated at St. Stephen's College, Sri Ram College of Commerce and Zakir Husain College, Delhi University. For more than three decades he taught Urdu language and literature at the Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi. His main interests have been translation, literary criticism and Urdu linguistics. Among his published works are: *A Tale of Four Dervishes* (Penguin Books), *Poems of Faiz Ahmad Faiz* and *Poems of N.M. Rashed* (M.D. Publications), *Distracting Words*, translations from Ghalib's Urdu and Persian poetry, and *The Quintessence of Self-Culture*, a translation from K.G. Saiyidain's writings. His *Lessons in Urdu Script* has seen several reprints. He lives in Delhi,

You will remember what I say

The Son of the Moment

NAZIR AHMAD

Translated from the Urdu, *Ibn-ul-Vaqt*
with an Introduction by

MOHAMMED ZAKIR

Foreword by

MUSHIRUL HASAN

Orient Longman

ORIENT LONGMAN PRIVATE LIMITED

Registered Office
3-6-272 Himayatnagar, Hyderabad 500 029 (A.P.), India

Other Offices
Bangalore, Bhopal, Bhubaneshwar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Ernakulam,
Guwahati, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, New Delhi, Patna

First Published in Urdu by Matba' Ansari, Delhi, 1888 A.D.
First Published in English Translation 2002
© Orient Longman Private Limited 2002

ISBN 81 250 2255 4

Typeset by
Scribe Consultants
New Delhi

Printed in India at
Baba Barkha Nath Printers
New Delhi

Published by
Orient Longman Private Limited
1/24 Asaf Ali Road
New Delhi 110 002

To the memory of
my uncle, Sheikh Mohammed Sadiq
and
my cousin, Bhā'ī Sabir (Manzaruddin Ahmad Siddiqui)

Contents

Foreword ix

Introduction xvii

1 The Inaugural 1

2 Ibn-ul-Vaqt Meets Mr Noble 6

3 Noble Sahib Goes to the English Camp 15

4 The Aftermath—Ibn-ul-Vaqt's Plight 25

5 Queen Victoria Assumes Reins—Ibn-ul-Vaqt Rewarded 27

6 At the Dining Table 31

7 A Deputy Collector's Complaints 43

8 Noble Sahib Makes Ibn-ul-Vaqt a Reformer 51

9 Ibn-ul-Vaqt Confers with Jan Nisar 65

10 Felicitations 73

11 Ibn-ul-Vaqt's Speech 77

12 Ibn-ul-Vaqt Faces Opposition 104

13 English Lifestyle and Islam 111

14 Religion and Intellect 115

15 People's Displeasure 121

16 The Pinch 128

17 Noble Sahib's Departure 134

18 A Misunderstanding 136

19 The Discord 144

20	Ibn-ul-Vaqt's Financial Anxieties	150
21	Hujjat-ul-Islam	153
22	Hujjat-ul-Islam Arrives	158
23	On Religion	161
24	Hujjat-ul-Islam Goes Back to the City	172
25	Hujjat-ul-Islam Explains	175
26	Reconciliation	179
27	On Religion	194
28	On Politics and Religion	224
	Select Glossary	239

Foreword

Why did only the British lion roar in so vast a country like India? Writing his general history of India from 1707 to 1781, Ghulam Husain Khan Tabatabai, author of *Siyarul Mutaakhkhirīn* (translated by F. Raymond in 1789), looked upon British rule as some sort of 'Divine Punishment' for the sins of the Indian ruling classes. Mirza Ạbu Talib (1752–1806) attributed Britain's victory over France to its superior navy. In his *Travels*, first published in English in 1810, he discussed how the British turned the tables against their enemies at the battle of Copenhagen, and how their conquest of Egypt and other colonies was due to their being formidable on shore as at sea. The great perfection to which they had brought their navy was, doubtless, the chief cause of their prosperity and the principal source of their wealth. For Lutfullah, who wrote his travelogue in English, it was the will of that one Supreme Being that a small island, which seemed on the globe like a mole on the body of a man, commanded the greater part of the world, and kept the rest in awe. Finally, Abdul Halim Sharar, the master storyteller from Lucknow who died in 1926, attributed the British triumph to two factors. First, 'the cup of negligence and foolishness of the people of India'; secondly, the power of the British government and the British people's 'far-sightedness, efficiency and forbearance' as against 'the ignorance and self-effacement of India.' The industrialised civilisation and its way of life was crying aloud to every nation, but 'no one in India heard this proclamation and all were destroyed.'

These perceptions were important, for at different points of time they enable the historian to construct the story of British political supremacy in India. What some of these accounts do not reveal, however, are the reasons why strong and sustained anti-colonial sentiments came to the fore in upper India and

Bengal, where they coalesced with unmistakable revivalist trends. The Faraizis, led by Haji Shariat-Allah who initiated his movement in 1818 after returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca, announced that so long as the British ruled in Bengal, congregational prayers in the mosques should not be performed. His son Dudu Miyan, representing the interests of the Muslim agriculturists, refused to pay rent and revenue, acknowledging only Allah's sovereignty. He struck terror, in the hearts of the Hindu zamindars of Faridpur by leading at night an expedition of 800 Faraizi peasants against the powerful Ghoshes. In the 24-Parganas in West Bengal, Titu Mir, born in 1782, campaigned for a purified Islam. His idiom was similar to that of Saiyid Ahmad of Bareilly and Shariat-Allah.

The leading Delhi scholar Shah Abdul Aziz declared India as *dār al-harb* (enemy territory). He believed that the Friday and *Id* prayers could not be performed as congregational prayers, and that it was improper to serve the British as clerks, servants or soldiers. His pronouncement sustained Saiyid Ahmad Shaheed's exertions against the British for twenty years after the annexation of Punjab, and legitimised other 19th-century stirrings against British rule. 'I would ask,' stated Maulvi Syed Qutb Shah Sahib of Bareilly, 'what course have you [Hindus and Muslims] decided on to protect your lives and faith? Were your views and mine the same, we might destroy them [the British] entirely with very little trouble; and if we do so, we shall protect our religions and save the country. And, as these ideas have been cherished and considered merely from a concern for the protection of the religions and lives of all you Hindus and Mussulmans of this country, this letter is printed for your information.' The ideological impulse from such local religious leaders led, as in the vicinity of Thana Bhawan, north of Delhi, the Muslim divines to join the 1857 uprising. Some amongst them founded a theological seminary at Deoband.

There is much evidence of the aversion to and antipathy towards the *firangīs* and their rāj. Maulvi Nazir Ahmad, who built his reputation through his creative writings and exemplified in his public life the trend to come to terms with western ideas

and institutions, captured the ethos in the 'oriental' branch of the Delhi College. When a high-ranking British official visited the college and shook hands with the teaching staff the Head Maulvi reciprocated. But soon thereafter 'he held his hand aloof as if it had become an impure limb. As soon as the officer turned away, he cleaned his hand not with English soap but by rubbing it with dust.'

Yet in many parts of north India, Muslim groups were prepared to make the colonial government work, seek adjustments within existing institutions and secure benefits from the administrative and bureaucratic structures. They were inclined to arrive at a workable *modus vivendi* with the new rulers and carve out new channels of aspirations and spiritual creativity. Hence, the growth of schools and colleges, the bold steps taken by some forward-looking Muslim personalities, the incentive to join the heaven born, and the clamour for a share in decision-making bodies. Quite a few scholars opined that Hindustan was a land of peace, as the British recognised the Islamic Personal Law in cases of inheritance, succession, gifts, charitable endowments, marriage, parentage, guardianship and maintenance. This is borne out by the rulings of the Shia *mujtahids* in Lucknow. When the *ālim* Syed Dildar Ali was questioned about the legality of taking service with the company he expressed a reluctant acquiescence as long as such employment did not involve forbidden acts.

Maulvi Nazir Ahmad's celebrated novel's opening lines are: 'What made Ibn-ul-Vaqt so prominent was the fact that he adopted the English lifestyle at a time when even to learn English was considered blasphemy and to use English goods an act of apostasy.'

At another level, influential Muslim groups in various regions made the colonial government work. Thus, in rural Punjab, many *sajjāda-nashīns* agreed to be incorporated into the framework of the British administration. By early 20th century, they were regarded as an integral part of the class of rural intermediaries on whom British rule rested. In Sind, the British constructed a political system that hinged on the co-operation

of the landed elites, of whom the *pīrs* made up a sizeable proportion. The very section of the elite, which, in theory, had most to lose from being too closely associated with the administration, found that there was much to gain from maintaining a good working relationship with their new rulers. Ghalib wrote to the Nawab of Rampur on January 13, 1858 that it was not, after all, such a bad thing to be a *namak-khwār-i sarkār-i angrez*—an eater of the salt of the English government.

This was Syed Ahmad Khan's line of argument as well. The beneficent character of British rule carried him away. He waxed eloquent on the British contribution to different spheres of life. His estimation was shared by many. New generations of Muslims grew up, for whom foreign rule was an unchanging fact of life, whether they liked it or not. In Punjab, the advent of British rule meant a transfer from one sort of infidel rule to another. For some time, since the British perpetuated the administrative patterns of the Mughals, including the use of Persian as the official language, the presence of a handful of British at the top made little difference to their day-to-day routine. In judicial and revenue employ, except in the highest posts, Muslims held their own in Bengal until the middle of the 19th century, and in U.P. for a generation thereafter. Here, the Islamic gentry in the *qasbas* remained well entrenched in the lower levels of the British service during the early 19th century; the Muslim landlords exercised an influence and power which persisted well into the twentieth century. Ghalib, who was exposed to the winds of doctrine blowing from the West, announced the tidings of the dawn and pointed the way to the light of the sun:

> The harp player, when he strikes the chord
> One can see what he is after,
> Happiness lies concealed behind the veil of sorrow,
> Not for wrath does the washerman beat the cloth.

His friend and biographer Hali had this to say on the blessings of British rule in his *musaddas*:

> The government has given you all kinds of freedom. It has completely opened up the roads to progress.
> From every direction these cries are coming. 'From prince to peasant, all men prosper.'
> Peace and security hold sway in all the lands. No caravan has its way blocked.
>
> The routes of travel and commerce are open, nor are those of industry and craft closed.
> Just as the routes of the acquisition of learning are lit, so too are those the acquisition of wealth made level.
> At home there is no fear of the burglar or enemy, abroad there is no fear of the dacoit or highwayman.

Yet, it must be said that not everybody shared the optimism of a Ghalib or a Hali. By the turn of the century, there remained a few hard nuts to crack. The Urdu poet, Akbar Allahabadi, born eleven years before the Great Rebellion, debunked both British imperialism and Syed Ahmad's politics of rapprochement. This is illustrated by the following verses:

> We of the East break our opponents' head
> They of the West change their opponents' nature.
>
> The guns have gone, and now come the professors.
> The adze has done its work; now comes the plane.
>
> They give us learning—just enough for us to sell our services
> And understanding—just enough for governmental purposes.

On Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and his Aligarh College, he had this to say:

> What our respected Sayyid says is good
> Akbar agrees that it is sound and fair.
> But most of those who head this modern school
> Neither believe in God, nor yet in prayer.
> They say they do, but it is plain to see
> What they believe in is the powers that be.

Long before Syed Ahmad's pioneering efforts, the Madrasa Ghaziuddin, founded in 1792 for the study of oriental languages, was converted in 1824 into a college known as the

Delhi College. Initially, it was established with two branches: an English branch where English language and literature and modern European sciences were taught and an Oriental branch in which not only Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit were taught but geography, mathematics and sciences as well. By far the most popular side of the education offered in Old Delhi College was that which dealt with science. Maulvi Zakaullah (1832–1910), in his old age, used to tell C.F. Andrews 'with kindling eyes' how eagerly these scientific lectures were followed. The doctrines of ancient philosophy taught through the medium of Arabic were 'thus cast in the shade before the more reasonable and experimental theories of modern science. The old dogma … that the earth is the fixed centre of the universe was generally laughed at by the higher students of the Oriental as well as by those of the English Department of the College.'

Many Muslims who distinguished themselves later had studied in Delhi College. Prominent amongst them were Altaf Husain Hali, the historian, Maulvi Zakaullah, the literary historian, Muhammad Husain Azad and the novelist, Maulvi Nazir Ahmad. Among the outstanding teachers was Mamluk Ali, who had the distinction of teaching, among others, Syed Ahmad Khan and his great traditionalist opposite numbers, Muhammad Qasim Nanotawi and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi.

Maulvi Nazir Ahmad (1836–1912), born in a family of Maulvis in Bijnor, was a product of what C.F. Andrews described as the 'Delhi Renaissance'. He started his career as a teacher. He rose in government service as a deputy collector in the North-West Provinces. He entered the Hyderabad service and became the Revenue Member. He was, like Hali, a friend and follower of Syed Ahmad and deeply committed to his educational mission. He was widely respected by the Delhi's intellectual elites and by the British officials. In 1869, he received the largest prize of Rs 1,000 in the government-instituted vernacular competition for his novel, *The Bride's Mirror*, and in the following years his novels and translations continued to carry off the best prizes. He received the titles of Khan Bahadur and

Shamsul Ulama, and was awarded the LL.D. by the University of Edinburgh.

Nazir Ahmad wrote extensively, including seven 'novels' or 'tales', books and theological treatises. In the words of Ralph Russell, he has 'an astounding range of vocabulary and a sureness of touch which enables him to write effortlessly and appropriately on every theme, and which makes one feel that he is never at a loss for suitable words.' His style, comments Ali Jawad Zaidi, historian of Urdu literature, is colloquial despite the intrusion of uncommon words and phrases from the classical languages. 'His sense of wit and humour, however, keeps him constant company even when he journeys through arid zones.'

Professor Mohammed Zakir, formerly Professor of Urdu at Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia and a scholar with several publications to his credit, has done extremely well to translate *Ibn-ul-Vaqt*. In his scholarly introduction, he sets out the importance of the work. 'It is not a narrative about a timeserver as his name would suggest in common parlance .... Nor is it about a quisling, pampered by his patrons. It is about a man who is keen and aware and determined to find a new path.' *Ibn-ul-Vaqt* represents, so argues the learned professor, the political and intellectual ferment in the aftermath of the 1857 revolt. I believe he is right. This novel mirrors both the anxieties of the Muslim intelligentsia in upper India as well as the debates that raged between the 'traditionalists' and the 'modernists' in the region. For this reason, it creatively reflects the contemporary political and intellectual scene of Delhi and its environs. I believe that *Ibn-ul-Vaqt* can well be used as a major historical text to comment on post-1857 north India.

MUSHIRUL HASAN
Professor of Modern Indian History
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

Introduction

What happens to a static society wedded to its medieval modes of thought in its encounter with an assailing dynamic society armed with its growing scientific knowledge and technology? Shall it confront it with all its nostalgia of past glory only to realise that the enemy is irrefutably superior? Shall it withdraw in a conservative spirit from any contact with the assailant only to find that it is not possible? Shall it lose its identity in accepting the ethos which the new order brings? To what extent can its culture assimilate the new bearings? Should the advocates of acceptance of the new order be taken as the real revolutionaries as, later, the people take to some of the assailant's ways? Will democratisation and secularisation vouchsafe harmony in a multi-religious society? How does the contemporary strike a fiction writer? How does he reconstruct the changing social milieu, the birth pangs of a new social order or the process of 'cultural radiation' in his narrative?

Such questions may have to be dealt with in a study of the socio-political and literary history of any society. *The Son of the Moment*, a translation of *Ibn-ul-Vaqt* written by Nazir Ahmad (1836–1912), the pioneer of modern fiction in Urdu, presents the late 19th-century Indian situation when beneath the external calm a struggle was going on in the minds of thinking men to meet the challenge which the establishment of the British rule had brought. It helps us understand the Indian sub-continent as it is today and may also be of some interest in the study of some Afro-Asian societies which, like India, have been under the dominance of the colonising industrialised West and most of which comprise the third world. As a piece of creative writing it may make us ponder again whether art is essentially for life, or life for art.

It is about a man, Ibn-ul-Vaqt, who saves an English officer

during the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny/The First War of Indian Independence, and under his influence adopts the English dress and lifestyle. It describes his difficulties as he finds himself pitted against his tradition-ridden compatriots as well as against some haughty British officials. It is not a narrative about a timeserver as his name would suggest in common parlance. It does not also refer to a *Sufi* or a mystic 'who must live in the present, regarding neither yesterday nor tomorrow, but absorbed in the eternal Now of divine energy.' Nor is it about a quisling, pampered by his patrons. It is about a man who is keen and aware and determined to find a new path. Ibn-ul-Vaqt actually represents the middle class born out of the ferment which was the result of the democratic ideas and rationalism brought along with the new learning introduced by the British and the new social material conditions created in India as a result of the British rule. It was a class which sought to gain the worldly advantages of the new order 'without forfeiting the spiritual comfort of the old'. It was this class out of which were to emerge the supplanters of the British power or the new destiny-makers of India.

In describing Ibn-ul-Vaqt's difficulties, this work, on the one hand, affords us a glimpse of the reactions of Indians to the British rule, from confrontation to acceptance, and on the other, the attitude of the British officers, marked at once by their personal intercourse with Indians as well as a stance of imperious arrogance and aloofness. It is one of those early writings of the Indians under the British rule in which they boldly brought out the shortcomings of the British government and pleaded for equality of Indians and the Englishmen as subjects of the same government. One may even find here an inkling of the spirit of rivalry between the two major communities, the Hindus and the Muslims, which was later made to develop into a cultural and political schism. How the two communities took to chauvinistic attitudes and with what continuing results, we need not discuss here. But one may easily guess here how the situation could lend itself to a policy of discrimination between these two communities by the new rulers.

Besides being an honest period piece, this work still seems

relevant as India with its religiosity marked by unobliterated caste prejudices, is still struggling to work out a synthesis between tradition and modernity. It may thus also signify the quest of a synthesis between what is called the secular West and the religious East.

The author's concern with religion in this work, as well as such other works of his, needs a special mention. To him religion is a code of conduct for private and social life, and all moral values which give meaning to it emanate from religion. His social concern with the basic idea to make the best of the world is the outcome of his religious belief that life is a probation for the next world and therefore supremely important. Such ideas do not necessarily lead to what is these days being termed as fundamentalism with its insistence on mindless conformism to the given rules, for, to Nazir Ahmad religion does not teach suspension of reason and prudence or to ignore the demands of the changing social realities. Besides this, despite the fact that so many brutalities have been carried out in the name of religion, and for so long, this much at least one has to concede that it is a humanising factor in that it seeks to provide checks on the animal instincts of man. For a man like Nazir Ahmad to whom religion and politics, that is, concern with the affairs of society, were not separate departments of life and who had a 'sensitive awareness' of what was going on around him, and one who had his vision of the world, it was natural to concern himself with values inspired by religion as he understood it.

Moreover, those were the days when Christian missionaries, over-conscious of the 'white man's burden', could be seen propagating their religion at the street corners in big cities and towns of India. A vast amount of polemical literature in Urdu shows how vehemently the Indians, to whom religion mattered, tried to defend their faith. With the growing realisation that British domination was not just a loss of their freedom but also a challenge to their culture and religious modes of thinking, even the politically awakened social reformers among Indians had to mix culture and religion with politics to combat the onslaught

of westernisation. Some of them even tried to reinterpret their religious scriptures as well in the light of the new social realities.

Even in today's world when intellectuals are talking about a 'clash of civilisations', we may ask ourselves what is it that may bring us close together? We have to realise that apart from deepening the divide between the developed and not so developed nations, and a rabid race of one-upmanship in taking to weaponry, what has the ethos, brought by rationalism and modernisation, given us over the last one hundred and fifty years or so? It has led us to a situation where economic consideration, which has unfortunately come to mean sheer shrewdness to make profit out of others' misfortunes, tends to outweigh the sense of justice and accountability among the powerful and the privileged. And that, in turn, has made the world a great theatre of geo-political power-play with the hanging threat of annihilation to mankind. It has given birth to individualism and a new culture of consumerism which, among other things, shows itself in a craving for stimulation by drugs, sex and cheap television entertainment. This craving among the youth spreading all over the world shows an attitude which speaks of non-attachment, indifference, irresponsibility and selfishness. Obviously, it is a valueless approach towards human life, for it ignores the common bond of humanity. Even secularism and liberalisation seem meaningless if they leave things to take their own course rather than stir a yearning in every heart for a better and still better social order. It is to be realised that virtue if not practised and propagated amounts to be its negation. But it does not mean that such practice and propagation should be at the cost of intellectual freedom. We, and particularly those who are privileged, have to learn that the world is to be essentially multi-cultural. We have to have a balanced outlook and in the spirit of fellow-feeling look beyond ourselves if we are to survive. Peace and prosperity are to be duly shared by all. What appears to be actually required is a harmony between people of different religions rather than the Toynbeean syncretisation of religions. Man, who unfolds the divine scheme behind all existence in the name of advancement of science and technology bringing in

material progress, verily needs to adopt a standard of values which may enable him to educate his mind, his emotions and his senses; values which are born of the truth that all mankind is a family, values which may not only purify the individual but may also reconstruct and renew society in every department of life, and which science and technology are just incapable of dealing with. Hasn't it become imperative to ponder whether the secular and the religious aspects of life should continue to be taken as provinces independent of each other? Shouldn't the sense of discrimination between good and bad, between right and wrong, be so developed as to create in man a sense of justice and accountability which may ultimately save him from fanaticism, self-assertiveness and exclusiveness in order to bring in a better social order, peace and prosperity for all?

Values inspired by religion and corroborated by human experience may still be helpful. After all, does the preaching that God is the Creator of all not aim at the development of a sense of brotherhood and fellow-feeling, the basic pre-requisites of a civilised man? Does it not seek to further strengthen this sense by preaching that we should be fair and just in our dealings in everyday life for there is a reckoning, a reward/punishment for our deeds, if not here and now, then later in whatever way in the next world? If we are so scared to name these as religious values, we may correlate them, on the one hand, with man's sense of discrimination between good and bad developed through his secular experience over the ages and on the other, with the realisation that ultimately one's welfare consists in the welfare of all. This realisation may infuse him to strive and reach out for a society more reassuring and more civilised.

It should, however, be remembered that such a standard will not help if it ignores the complexities and requirements of human nature and the changing human condition. In fact, just as life is a continuous becoming, such a standard of values should serve as a sort of an ongoing process having the capability or provision of regenerating itself in the face of ever new experiences man has to undergo in the unfolding process of the whole existence. Of course, it should serve more as an unceasing

call to keep up an ever vigilant conscience rather than be a demand for mindless conformism. Will that be possible? Or, shall the world, whether uni-polar or bi-polar, or the multi-polar one to emerge, continue to remain tension-ridden? Shall the creative writers come forward and keep and inform the social conscience? Or, shall they confine themselves to their secluded corners or be told to be detached, dispassionate observers and just guard 'the morality of their art'? Can anyone be really free from social obligation? We have to remember that every act, including deliberate silence, of a normal man in society signifies his attitude in a given context or situation. All writers grope towards greatness. Insight and entertainment, terminal lights on the path of greatness, may or may not be intertwined, but can any greatness by writers be achieved by indifference in presenting human relationships in their work? Should a fiction writer who re-creates the facts of life be an exception?

About the author and the present work it may be added that in Urdu fiction, Nazir Ahmed still remains unsurpassed in discussing vital, obviously including the religious issues concerning man in society. Besides his traditional education, he had the opportunity of acquainting himself with the new world of learning at the Delhi College, rejuvenated by the British. The predicament of Muslims after the total breakdown of the Mughals and the establishment of the British rule, their loosening adherence to religion, their degradation, the irrelevance of the educational system to the social needs, paucity of books and other reading material for children and of literature addressing the realities of life stirred Nazir Ahmad's conscience. He was not to lament for the past glory. But because of his interest in contemporary social affairs he did not forget to think about the ultimate destiny of man. To him there was no inherent contradiction between modernisation and rationalism on the one hand and social organisation on the basis of religious values on the other. He stood for a firm belief in the dogmas of religion so much so that traditional faith seems to have found a discerning spokesman in him. But then he could be intellectually independent sifting the traditional for its virtues and

disapproving of what he found unconducive to individual salvation and social welfare. Ennobling the 'man in society' in the changing material conditions remained his primary concern. As an advocate of rationalism he could even hold that 'it is reason which is the moving spirit of religion'. In fact, he is all for *ijtihād*, individual reasoning and judgement on religious matters, on which he later wrote a book too. Although unlike Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (d.1898), the great Muslim reformer, he was not prepared to allow intellect to deal with the metaphysical concepts of religion, he readily collaborated with him to verily make his Aligarh Movement a symbol of new consciousness, at once cultural, educational and social. As a government employee in the Education and Revenue Departments, he gained a personal knowledge of the country and became conversant with the needs of the people. Besides his translation of the Indian Penal Code and of the Qur'an into Urdu, and his highly valuable *al-Huqūq val Farā'iz*, (Rights and Obligations) in three volumes (1906), containing subjectwise the injunctions of the Qur'an and *Hadīth*, Traditions of Prophet Muhammad, regarding the life of man in society, along with his translation and commentary, Nazir Ahmad tried to meet the needs of society by his public lectures, fictional writings and theological treatises. He wrote *Mir'at ul 'Urūs*, (The Bride's Mirror) (1869) and *Banāt un Na'sh*, (Daughters of the Bier) (1873), on women's education, *Taubat un Nasūh*, (Repentance of Nasuh) (1877), on the growing indifference to the religious and moral values, *Fasāna e Mubtalā* or *Muhsināt*, (A Tale of Two Wives) (1885), on the evils of polygamy, *Ayāmā* (1891) on widow remarriage, and *Ru'yā-e-Sādiqa* (1892) on application of Islam to modern problems. These proved highly successful and brought him recognition and rewards. He was given the titles of *Khan Bahadur* and *Shams ul 'Ulama*. The University of Edinburgh conferred an honorary degree of LL.D. on him for his services to modern Urdu prose and the Punjab University awarded him the degree of D.O.L. In fact, he was the foremost writer who made Urdu fiction truly 'the literature of engagement' much before Prem Chand (d.1936), the most famous fiction writer, or

the Progressive Writers' Movement in the thirties of the twentieth century.

Nazir Ahmad belonged to a period when there was a zeal for reform among Indians. Essentially a moralist, he wrote to instruct. He was the pioneer in 'novel'-writing in Urdu. Distinguished by his descriptive power and humour, now 'springing directly from his personal observation' having 'a strong intellectual basis' and now verging on caricature, it is the thematic value he is most concerned with and which gives character to his fictional work leaving out the other technicalities as subsidiary. To literary critics his plots are thin and his characters are types 'who do not speak, but deliver speeches'. But it can hardly be denied that all such works of his are distinctly marked by his keen sense of realism and are highly engaging. His ability to discuss questions of vital importance in a language akin to the colloquial, his flexible style, his power of description, his remarkable skill in narrating the day-to-day events inside and outside the houses of the middle-class people, the liveliness of his characters, though named mostly to accord with their characteristics, his fondness for the use of proverbs and idioms serving as amusing diversions, and his sense of humour make them highly enjoyable. He is one of those most distinguished writers who brought a renaissance in Indian literature and made Urdu the language of the rising middle class with all its ideals and growing aspirations although his closeness to the colloquial idiom landed him in trouble when he employed it in his translation of the Qur'an, and later, copies of his books *Ummahāt-ul-Umma* on the wives of Prophet Muhammad were burnt by the devouts. The allegation about the present work, although refuted by Nazir Ahmad, that it carried a caricature of Sir Syed, also contributed to its fame.

Nazir Ahmad's concern with the destiny of man in this work, the intellectual ring which his discussions provide and which may urge one to have a dialogue with oneself, his knowledge of the country and the people, together with his analytical mind taking cognisance of the political, economic, cultural and religious nature of the East-West encounter in India really make this work a classic of great contemporary interest.

Editions of *Ibn-ul-Vaqt*, as printed at Matba' Ansari, Delhi, 1306 AH/ 1888 AD and as printed at Jayyed Barqi press, Delhi, 1360 AH/ 1941 AD, have been consulted in this translation.

Translations of the Qur'anic text, with the serial number of chapters and verses have been taken from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* as published by Amana Corporation, Brentwood, Maryland, U.S.A., 1989.

I hope it will be appreciated that without overlooking the letter and spirit of the original, the narration has been slightly modified to give it a more appealing form.

I am grateful to Janab Muslim Ahmad Nizami, the grandson of the author who on his own behalf and on behalf of other heirs of the author gave me permission to publish this translation. I have to thank Prof. Azimush Shan Siddiqui, Prof. Haneef Kaifi, Mr Shahabuddin Ansari, Prof. Mujeeb Ashraf and Mr Abdur Rasheed for the interest they took in the progress of this work.

To my sons Mohd. Azhar Kaleem, Mohd. Anis ur Rehman, Mohd. Tanzim ur Rehman and my nephew Mohd. Fuzail Amer I have to say *shābāsh* for their help in preparing the manuscript.

MOHAMMED ZAKIR
Professor, Department of Urdu
Jamia Millia Islamia
Delhi, India
March 1997

P.S. I have to thank my colleague, Prof. Mushirul Hasan, son of my elderly colleague, the late Prof. Mohibbul Hasan, for giving a historian's hand in writing the Foreword.

To Mrs Vidya Rao, Mrs Hemlata K. Shankar and particularly to Mrs Annu Kurien of Orient Longman Ltd., I owe special thanks for their editorial comments and unfailing cooperation in seeing this work through the press.

January 2000

Note: In order to facilitate the printing, footnotes and the diacritical marks have been avoided as much as possible. A select glossary has been provided containing proper names and words of Indian origin while most of such words have been explained in the translated text itself in a way that may not distract the readers.

1 The Inaugural

Had it been like these days no one would have even known about it.* What made Ibn-ul-Vaqt so prominent was the fact that he adopted the English lifestyle at a time when even to learn English was considered blasphemy and to use English goods an act of apostasy. We have ourselves seen that a person, although travelling by train, would not smoke, even before his friends. One of my friends was employed in the revenue department far away from home. He had to go from field to field for which the Indian type of shoes was not suited. Therefore, he had to wear English boots. But whenever he came back home for a day or two, he would wear his old, worn-out Indian shoes. Only then would he go out. Those were the heydays of the Delhi College. A high-ranking British official visited the college and look what respect he got! He shook hands with all the teachers. Willy-nilly the Head Maulvi too had half a handshake with him but then he held his hand aloof as if it had become an impure limb. As soon as the officer turned away, he cleaned his hand, not with English soap but by rubbing it with dust. There were a few other Muslims who, though not as reprehensible as Ibn-ul-Vaqt, were, to some extent, of the same mind. Their sons studied English in the College. If any one of those boys drank water from the pitchers placed next to where the Arabic-Persian classes were being held, the Maulvis had the pitchers broken to pieces. There was no limit to such nonsense and prejudice, yet the English could never dream of enjoying again the same halcyon days of carefree governance as the British Government did in those days. The common run of people did not distinguish between the useful and harmful and the good and bad. The Government was like a kindly father and the subjects like innocent children.

---

*This book was written in 1888 A.D.

Learning English proved to be a curse for them just as eating the fruit of the forbidden tree was for Adam. As the saying goes, while they wished to be exempted from saying the regular prayers they were obliged to keep fasts as well. The English language and lifestyle were adopted to develop a familiarity with the English but, as we see, there is hesitation instead of familiarity and contempt instead of friendship. Tension between the ruler and the ruled was on the increase. Live in the river, but at war with the crocodile! This is the situation. Let us see which way the wind blows!

It is really difficult to know what exactly inspired Ibn-ul-Vaqt to adopt the English lifestyle. He came of a noble well-to-do family whose members regarded their traditional lifestyle as essential for nobility. They were respected for their learning which had come to be their hereditary trait. Some of them were men of medicine, some were teachers (not in government service), some were jurists, there were some who had learnt the Qur'an by heart, and some were secluded ascetics. In short, it was an illustrious family. Most if not all of them, were highly competent and showed their excellence in various fields. The Royal Fort met their expenses. The only connection they had with the English was the fact that they lived under English rule, though in their vanity they thought it was not so. That Ibn-ul-Vaqt was admitted to the College was simply because the Government had recruited all the celebrated scholars of Arabic and Persian in the Government colleges. Thus, he was sent to the College to make his Arabic and Persian pure and sound and not to make education a means of living. He was undoubtedly one of the good, if not the selected few, students of his days. Some of his classmates excelled him in some subjects but he was second to none in the aggregate scores. This was due to the fact that his weakness in mathematics was made good by his scores in history, geography, culture and civilisation, and ethics, subjects which he was very fond of. The history of any country in any period was his favourite subject. He took a keen interest in general knowledge, too. A silver medal was given every year for the best essay. For the six years that Ibn-ul-Vaqt was at school

he never gave anyone else a chance to win the medal in English, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. During the vacations, whenever he got an opportunity, he visited the ruins of Delhi. He was always anxious to meet the foreigners who came to the city, as businessmen or as tourists, and inquired about their countries and people. His memory was replete with historical events and on many a pithy matter he would often argue in the light of these events. Once during his talks he drew a map of Asia showing the important cities and mountains and rivers. It agreed with the authentic map, when later compared, with only a minor discrepancy or two. He was always keen to know about the nations and communities of the world and in particular their customs. In fact, he knew much more about religion than what was found in books on the subject. When a new book was introduced in his class he first asked: Who was its author? Where and to which period did he belong? Who were his teachers and contemporaries? What were the memorable events and anecdotes of his life?

Self-respect and dignity were the remarkable traits of his character to the extent that one mistook them for vanity. He thought it below his dignity to take any obligation so much so that except for his teacher he did not like to ask even his classmates about anything. He always preferred to be in the class of a teacher who was respected by the Principal. That is why he changed his subject often from Arabic to Persian and from Persian to Arabic. He took quite some time to form an opinion. But once he formed it, he would not change it as if he had made a vow not to. It was not a secret that in his view the very fact that a nation had an empire to rule was clear proof of the superiority of its customs and ceremonies, its habits and thoughts, and words and deeds, that is, all the conditions, collectively if not individually. He expressed this openly and with conviction. He had no need to join the service of the English nor did he wish it. It was because of this conviction alone that he held every Englishman, even a Eurasian, in high esteem. A person having such thoughts should have learnt English; more so because he had been in the College. He too might have wished to have learnt it. But on the death of his father, as a part

of a hereditary obligation, he had to take the responsibility of looking after the estate of Her Highness Nawab Mashuq Mahal Begum. And this, despite the fact that he had an elder brother who could have taken this responsibility if he chose. But his brother's continual devotional exercises left him no time. Moreover, he had a distracted mind. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was thus forced to shoulder this responsibility. For a few days he tried to look after the affairs of the estate after his college hours. The Begum was not at all a stickler about it but Ibn-ul-Vaqt himself realised that he could not do justice to two things at the same time. He, therefore, left the College. But he continued to be a regular visitor to the royal library for books on history and other subjects of his interest. He also regularly visited the royal press for newspapers. He was so fond of history and reading the papers that he never tired of them.

He was a student of Arabic and Persian at college but a rudimentary knowledge of English was essential as he had to consult books on mathematics in English. He had a receptive mind. Even with a rudimentary knowledge it was not at all difficult for him to follow the method of solving the questions. Although while studying mathematics he had improved his English and later when he thought he had made himself into a true English gentleman after his adopting the English lifestyle and could well understand the English language, yet all his life he could not speak it fluently. We never saw him learning English word by word. And, how could his self-esteem permit him 'to break his horns and pass muster among the calves?' But we know for certain that he always tried to improve his English as much as his circumstances would permit. To tell the truth, it was really he who made himself as proficient in English as he did. Otherwise, we believe that other than one's mother tongue no one can know a language as well as one should.

Haven't you heard the interesting story about the compiler of the Arabic lexicon, *Qāmūs*? This much at least you may know that of the numerous Arabic lexicons, *Qāmūs* is the most exhaustive and authentic. Its compiler was of Persian origin. Ever since his childhood he had aspired to become a master of Arabic.

He studied it as much as possible in Persia. Then he went from place to place—Najd, Tahama, Yemen, Syria, Khazarat and Badawa—to gain mastery over it. He pursued his ambition throughout his life and then he compiled the *Qāmūs*, which is still considered an authority all over the world. But look, how God was to expose his knowledge of Arabic. He married an Arab woman. One night he asked his maid-servant to blow out the earthen lamp. What did his parrot-like speech reveal? Instead of the Arabic idiom 'blow out the lamp' he used the Persian one, 'murder the lamp'. The Arab wife at once found out. The very next morning she went to the Qazi's court and made a complaint against him. God knows whether she remained with him or got separated but his knowledge of Arabic was well exposed. In the English dailies which have English editors, the *bābū* English is always ridiculed. Apparently, they call it the English of the Bengalis but in fact, they ridicule everyone's English without naming them—rather, more the English of the others because for Bengalis, English has almost come to be a native language. Indeed, there have been, and there are still, some Bengalis who are so proficient in English that even the English people acknowledge their mastery over it. Such instances are rare though.

One of my friends told me a story of how he had once gone to meet an English officer. He was told that it was the time that the officer went to his club. Therefore, he had to go there to meet him. At the club, as the servant went to inform the officer, my friend himself overheard the Englishmen assembled there laughing at and mimicking the English of the Indians. He told me that the English they mimicked was really to be laughed at. True, the people whose mother tongue is English, have a right to laugh at the people of other countries who speak it. But if the English of the Indians is to be laughed at, the Hindustani which the English speak is worth weeping over. For, the Indians learn English with the help of books whereas the Englishmen live among the Indians for a whole lifetime yet can do no more than speak the pidgin 'Well, *tum kyā māngtā*?' (Well, what do you want?). To whom shall we relate this woeful tale? The English had destroyed our munificence and wealth, business and

trade, art and craft, and spoiled our customs and traditions, dress and manners, our ways of life, religion and science, our honour and nobility. Only one thing was spared: our language. That too is being spoiled now. The position is that the English speak wrong, straggled and inconsistent Urdu because of their lack of knowledge of it. But our Indian brethren have started to emulate them for as they say, 'a ruler's vice is deemed to be a virtue by the ruled.' Once an Indian, quite grown up and mature enough, went to England. When he came back four or five years later, he was so devoid of common sense that he spoke Urdu, if ever he would, very slowly, pausing and closing his eyes as if he was reading from his mind.

2 Ibn-ul-Vaqt Meets Mr Noble

There was one event in the life of Ibn-ul-Vaqt which may have contributed to the change in his lifestyle—and that requires a little explanation. During the last days of Bahadur Shah, the last Mughal Emperor, the choice of the heir-apparent had become a controversial issue and it fell between Mirza Fakhrul Mulk and Mirza Jawan Bakht. Mirza Fakhrul Mulk, being the eldest, more capable and a man of dignity, had many supporters. Even the English officers and Her Highness Nawab Mashuq Mahal Begum, who happened to be his aunt (mother's sister), supported him. Mirza Jawan Bakht depended solely on his mother, Nawab Zeenat Mahal Begum, the Queen, for support. She had a great influence over the King. If it were within his powers, the King would have got Jawan Bakht enthroned. But the English officers proved to be a great hurdle. Mirza Jawan Bakht was treated as the crown-prince in all respects but his stipend was under the charge of the Royal Treasury. Secondly, the English Government refused to recognise him as the King's heir-apparent. The supporters of Mirza Fakhrul Mulk suffered greatly in this struggle. When Nawab Mashuq Mahal Begum

found that the King's attitude had changed, she had her famous palace Rahatgah at Kashmere Gate renovated and on the pretext of her enjoying a change of climate started to live in the city. She did not stop her visits to the Fort but had all her belongings and household goods shifted to the Rahatgah.

Although the Jawan Bakht episode, that is, the dispute over the choice of heir-apparent, had settled in a year or so, yet she had become so fond of the Rahatgah that she kept to her routine—after her breakfast she would go to the Fort and be back at the Rahatgah to say her afternoon prayers and to sleep at night. This practice she continued till the great calamity, the Mutiny, befell Delhi in 1857. Thereafter she never stepped out of the Fort.

More than two months after the Mutiny there was a bomb blast in the *Dīwān-e-'Am* (the Hall of Public Audience), at about 7.30 p.m., which shook the whole Fort. Nawab Mashuq Mahal Begum was so terrified by the blast that three days later, she died of heart failure. To Allah we belong and to Him we return! She had a good disposition, and was devout and benevolent. God saved her from the disgrace which came to be the destiny of the house of Timurlane. Anyway, the very next day after the Mutiny, Nawab Mashuq Mahal Begum had asked Ibn-ul-Vaqt to shift all the household goods and effects from the Rahatgah to the Fort and to lock the premises of the Rahatgah. What a large number of articles! Twenty bullock carts did four rounds a day. It took more than a month to shift and arrange the goods properly. On the fourth day after the outbreak of the Mutiny, Ibn-ul-Vaqt was on his way to the Fort after he had sent off the last round of carts an hour or so before sunset. He was accompanied by two servants and all the three were armed. At that time whenever two persons met, they only talked of the Mutiny. These three too, talked of it as they went along. Passing by Katra Mohsin Khan, they reached the ground between the magazine and the Delhi College when they saw some corpses of Englishmen on the left side of the road. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was stunned to see the deadly sight. At that moment it looked dreadful enough to frighten even the most daring man if he were alone.

But they took courage as they were three. Ibn-ul-Vaqt stopped by the corpses and with extreme anger and sorrow said to his companions, 'Look, what a foolish act these tyrants have committed! A severe curse will befall the city, it seems. Shedding innocent blood never goes unpunished. God knows at what an inauspicious moment Emperor Shahjahan (1627–1666 A.D.) had laid the foundations of this unfortunate city that not even one century has passed in peace since then. But this time it seems people will forget even Nadir Shah's massacre of the citizens of Delhi (in 1739 A.D.).'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt's companions too agreed with him. There was still an hour to go for the after-sunset prayers. Up above, the sun as if it had died was covered in the red shroud of dusk ready to be laid at rest in the grave of the west and here, down below, lay dead bodies shrouded by the mourning shadows of the walls. To behold such a dreadful sight in a city like Delhi, with the evening falling, in the month of fasts! There would have been bustling crowds at this place had it been like any other day. But now as Ibn-ul-Vaqt stood at the crossroads, not a soul was to be seen as far as he could see. Afraid of the bad characters of the city, people had retired to their homes even before the day had ended, and sat behind closed doors rammed with huge stones. Ibn-ul-Vaqt stood bewildered when one of his companions said, 'Sir, there is little time left to break the fast and the Fort is still far off. What was to be has happened, and what is destined will come to be! This much we know now that the innocent will also suffer with these wretched *Tilangās* (the Indian soldiers in English uniform). Let us proceed, Sir.'

As they were nearing the windmill they heard the sound of footsteps behind them. They were already so terrified at the sight of the dead bodies that their hearts beat all the faster. They turned around and saw that it was a man but, thank God, he was not armed. He was running fast and as these three had slowed their pace he reached them as they were climbing down the steps of the windmill. Even from a distance he knew who was the master among them. Approaching, he paid his respects to Ibn-ul-Vaqt. Ibn-ul-Vaqt found him to be a young man of

twenty-eight years or so, wearing the dress of an attendant or orderly of an English officer. The turban on his head and the sash round his waist revealed that he had been on duty. Fear, sorrow and anxiety were writ large on his face. His lips were parched and he was gasping for breath. He wanted to talk to Ibn-ul-Vaqt but again and again he turned to look at the dead bodies. He could not have had a complete view because of the small magazine in between, yet he could not stop himself from looking at them. Without waiting for Ibn-ul-Vaqt to say anything he said, 'I am Jan Nisar and belong to the Pathans of Bahadurpur. For four years I have been Noble Sahib's orderly, the Joint Magistrate of Rohtak. Our Sahib had been ill for several months. He was proceeding on leave to England and took me along to accompany him up to Bombay. It was the fourth day when we came and stayed in the dāk-bungalow. At noon the Mutiny broke out. As the Sahib was not well, he could not go anywhere. The Tilangās captured and kept him locked up in the guard-room at Kashmere Gate. Some other captured Englishmen were also there. Today, they made all the prisoners stand up in a row and fired a volley at them which was most unjust and ill-advised. Our Sahib got wounded and fell down. But he still has life in him. Because I was much afraid, I could not take care of him but I stealthily took an earthen pot of water from the mosque and left it there beside him. It will really be a good deed for the sake of God if you save our Sahib. May you be exalted ever more! Our Sahib is an Englishman but thoroughly gentle and a great patron of the noble ones. He is good-natured and extremely kind-hearted. You may ask the people of Rohtak. They will tell you. He has fixed allowances and stipends for scores of orphans and widows. In criminal cases, he deposits the fine he has to impose from his own pocket in the Government Treasury.' With these words Jan Nisar fell down at Ibn-ul-Vaqt's feet and continued, 'Hidden behind the door, I listened to what you said when you were standing by the dead bodies. I took courage from that and verily I feel that God has sent you here only to save our Sahib at this hour.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt raised Jan Nisar from the ground and said,

'Whatever these vile and mean, ungrateful and rebellious Tilangās have been doing is out and out tyranny which no religion or community approves of. If I rescue your Sahib, it is my human duty. When did they fire the volley at them?'

'At 2 o'clock,' replied Jan Nisar.

'2 o'clock!' exclaimed Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'It must have been the same sound that we heard at that time,' he said to one of his servants.

'How do you know that your Sahib is alive?' he asked Jan Nisar.

'Sir, just before you came, the rays of the sun had fallen over the bodies. The faces of all the others had turned white but our Sahib's face showed a little colour. I noticed some movement in the body too. He seemed to breathe when I went to place the pot of water. God knows where he is hurt for he is lying unconscious. Ever since he was captured in the dāk-bungalow, I have been near him always and he has never been out of my sight. I cannot say anything about his wounds but he has still some life in him. For God's sake, please come and see him. If he is still alive, please take care of him. May God grant he is saved, for, if he is dead, it is not he alone but scores of poor people like me will be dead with him! I am a person of no worth and it is disrespectful to utter a word before you, but, Sir, this English rule is not likely to go now. All this tumultuous din and cry is a matter of only a few days. If our Sahib is saved with your help, you will see how well he will treat you.'

From the moment Ibn-ul-Vaqt had learnt that an Englishman had been lying wounded and left for dead he had been thinking of some way to rescue him. He was apparently attentive to Jan Nisar but he was not listening to most of what he said. At last he asked his two servants, 'Well, what do you think?'

One of them said, 'We are at your disposal, Sir. We'll do as you please!'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'I need this much help from you. All of us are observing fasts. First of all, let us take an oath of secrecy, and secondly, if the Sahib is alive, help me to somehow take him to my house.'

Both the servants raised their hands towards the *Qibla* (the direction of the Ka'ba in the holy city, Mecca), towards which the Muslims turn their faces when at prayer, and took an oath of secrecy. Then the four went back to the dead bodies. Jan Nisar took them to where Noble Sahib was lying. It was already dusk. Jan Nisar felt his body. It was warm. Smothered in blood as he was, they could not find out where he was wounded and whether they were deep wounds. Not a man was to be seen there, yet they were so frightened that the slightest sound alarmed them. With the help of Ibn-ul-Vaqt and his servants, Jan Nisar had Noble Sahib mounted on his back. Being unconscious, he was very difficult to handle. Ibn-ul-Vaqt and his servants had to support him all the way. They were relieved and emboldened as not a soul was in sight.

Ibn-ul-Vaqt had thought of taking the wounded Noble Sahib to his place but he had no idea what he would do after that. As a matter of fact, he had no time to think about it. As soon as he had learnt of the heart-rending incident from Jan Nisar he had gone with him to carry Noble Sahib and then had to help in handling him all the way. As he reached the street corner in front of his house, he realised what he had done and only then did he think about where to keep him. His paternal aunt ever since she was widowed had been living in his house with her children. Because of her husband's bequest she was well-off and now that her children had grown up, they wanted to build their own house. The piece of land they had inherited from their father was adjacent to Ibn-ul-Vaqt's house and had been lying empty for a long time. They had started construction on it four months ago at the beginning of the dry season and the house was complete by now. Only the plastering work had to be completed but when the Mutiny broke out the work had stopped. To guard the building material stored there and also with the idea that there must be a light at night in the house, the two servants of Ibn-ul-Vaqt stayed there at night turn by turn.

Ibn-ul-Vaqt took Noble Sahib to that house and said to Jan Nisar and the servant whose turn it was that night, 'Keep the

doors shut and wash the wounds before I come back. But be careful, no one should know of it.'

In spite of the excitement and hurry, Ibn-ul-Vaqt kept in mind that the mutineers and hooligans of the city, who had raised their heads, were after the life and honour of anyone who allegedly had sympathies with the English Government. He said to himself, 'It is not advisable to undertake such a risky affair without some strong support. Walls have ears! May God save us from misfortune! If news of this leaks out after a few days, what shall I, a poor grain of gram, do against the fire of the multitude?' Nearby was the *Khānqāh* (the seat of the Muslim saint, Shah Haqqani). In a way, the whole city confided in him and thousands of *vilāyatīs* (the Afghans), were his disciples. More than fifty, and sometimes even more than a hundred of them stayed there to seek religious guidance from him. Ibn-ul-Vaqt thought there was nothing to fear if Shah Haqqani helped him in this matter. He was also convinced that even if Shah Sahib did not agree with him he would be gracious enough not to disclose it to anyone. So, before going to his house he went straight to the Khānqāh. He found it over-crowded and learnt that the ringleader of the mutineers was there to get the decree of *jihād* (holy war) signed by the Muslim divines. Heated discussions had been going on since the noon prayers but Shah Sahib was not at all in favour of the decree. To him, fighting against the English Government was mutiny, a political disturbance. It was not possible for Ibn-ul-Vaqt to find his way to Shah Sahib and speak to him in private. He had to come back a bit disappointed but in his heart he agreed with the Muslim divines of the Khānqāh. He was happy that in the matter of religion the Muslim divines of the Khānqāh would not yield to any intimidation or threat of a mutineer or even from the whole world. What was more, the mutineers could do nothing against the Muslim divines of the Khānqāh. Even the least harm done to anyone there would lead to violence and bloodshed.

With these thoughts in his mind, Ibn-ul-Vaqt reached his house and as he stepped in, Jan Nisar gave him good news. He said, 'After we washed him we found that there were no serious

wounds. The Sahib has also opened his eyes, but he is too weak to speak.'

To have his wounds dressed by a doctor was out of the question. But, God be praised, they healed within one and a half months or so by pouring cold water on them. But Noble Sahib's morning and evening walks had to be discontinued and Ibn-ul-Vaqt took care of everything with the assistance of Jan Nisar. There was a big change in Noble Sahib's diet. However, the seriousness of the disease on account of which he was to go to England was much reduced. Also, he had developed a constant, mild headache probably owing to his excessive reading. Now with his reading completely stopped and his mind freed from this activity, he felt much better. This proved to be a medicine, so to say. But, he busied himself with other things. Thus, it was only now and then that he had headaches which he attributed to the change in his diet. For three months and nine days Noble Sahib stayed there. During this period a great closeness developed between Ibn-ul-Vaqt and Noble Sahib that no Indian had ever had before with an Englishman. In the beginning Ibn-ul-Vaqt was hesitant because he was not well acquainted with Noble Sahib and because of Noble Sahib's status. But Noble Sahib's routine had altogether stopped —reading books and newspapers, court duties, morning and evening walks, and meetings with the people. The only thing to keep him busy now was Ibn-ul-Vaqt's company. So, he did not like Ibn-ul-Vaqt to be away from him even for a moment. The true thoughts of a man are best known in times of affluence and adversity. Noble Sahib had lain wounded, helpless, needy and friendless, away from his country, and his life was in constant danger. He fancied relief by death as the only certainty. But oh God, how steadfast he was! Not even once did he show any sign of weakness or anguish during the whole stay. He was like a proud guest, a reckless refugee. What did poor Jan Nisar count for? Even Ibn-ul-Vaqt with all his discretion felt reluctant to go freely to him. The study of history and geography, and his general knowledge through newspapers had already made Ibn-ul-Vaqt an Anglophile. Thus, his talks

with Noble Sahib were like a never-ending chain. Sometimes these continued till after midnight and neither of them thought of ending them. Their discussions were mostly about the Mutiny and started with the day-to-day happenings that Ibn-ul-Vaqt had come to know about in the Fort and ended in general topics. For instance, if it really was a Mutiny, why did it take place? To what extent could it spread? Was it the time when the different communities of India—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Marhattas, Bengalis, Madrasis, Rajputs, Jats and Goojars—would be united in a concerted effort? How much strength did the Indians have? Which of the princely states might revolt? What honour and prestige did the pensioner King of Delhi hold in the eyes of the people? Would the frontier powers like the Gorkhas and the people of Afghanistan join the revolt? Was there any other contemporary foreign power which might covet the Indian empire? Was it only a spontaneous tumult in the army or had it been brewing for a long time and were the people too, a party to it? Were the people pleased or displeased with the English Government? And if displeased, why? To what extent were the religious feelings the cause of the Mutiny? Could it be called a jihād, a holy war, according to the Muslim faith? Then, the course of their talks would drift to some other topic. Sometimes Noble Sahib asked Ibn-ul-Vaqt about the ways and customs of the Indians which Ibn-ul-Vaqt explained to him in the minutest detail. Ibn-ul-Vaqt had himself always been interested in knowing about other countries. He too addressed his enquiries to Noble Sahib, and Noble Sahib answered them as fully as words would allow. He left out nothing—neither good nor bad about his country and people. Thus, in Noble Sahib's company Ibn-ul-Vaqt learnt all about the English society, although he had not observed it himself. Maybe, since Ibn-ul-Vaqt had already some sort of faith in the English people, he became all the more firm in his views about them after living in the company of Noble Sahib for more than three months. No wonder that he might have made up his mind to change his lifestyle during this period. We do not propose here to write an account of the private life of Noble Sahib or of Ibn-ul-Vaqt during the Mutiny.

It may, however, be said that from the moment Noble Sahib regained consciousness at Ibn-ul-Vaqt's house and until he left, he never complained of his personal pain and misery. What he often said was, 'Alas, I am in such a condition that I cannot do anything for my nation and country!' To him death was far better than an idle life. He was all the more worried because no news was coming. He talked to Ibn-ul-Vaqt as long as he was with him, otherwise all the time he would walk up and down in the hall. His wounds were not yet completely healed when he insisted that Ibn-ul-Vaqt should somehow take him to the English Camp. Ibn-ul-Vaqt felt saddened by this premature insistence and would say to himself, 'Interest is a mad driver, indeed! Had he gone out, he would have known what a fire is raging all around. He is in seclusion and confined to the four walls of the house, just like our womenfolk, with no idea of what is happening outside. Maybe, he thinks I am deliberately detaining him.'

By the time his wounds were healed, Noble Sahib had become so disgusted that several times he threatened Ibn-ul-Vaqt and said, 'If you detain me any more, I shall run away.' Ibn-ul- Vaqt would laugh away but sometimes would get annoyed and say, 'If life is such a burden to you and you want to commit suicide, then let me have the reward of the virtuous act of disposing of a dead body!'

3 Noble Sahib Goes to the English Camp

Ibn-ul-Vaqt would somehow put off such words of Noble Sahib jokingly, but to himself he would say, 'He may pine away or fall sick and I will be held responsible for it. As the saying goes, "repay not virtue but vice!"' Thus, they decided that Noble Sahib should write a letter to the English Camp officer in Punjab and Jan Nisar should take it to him secretly. He would have to pass through the villages of the districts of Gurgaon, Rohtak and Karnal. Jan Nisar undertook the job. From the day Jan Nisar

left, Noble Sahib and Ibn-ul-Vaqt started to count the days and speculate about his return. Both of them knew every inch of the region that Jan Nisar had to cross, but in spite of discussing it for several days they could not agree on the possible date of his return. This was mainly because no one, even Jan Nisar, could exactly know beforehand the events which he was likely to face on his way to the Camp and back. Ibn-ul-Vaqt might have had some idea, however imperfect, unsound or incomplete. But Noble Sahib was unwilling to consider any adverse reasons which might delay the return. He was impatient. According to his own calculations Jan Nisar must return on the fifteenth day after he had left. True, he was a steady man, but truer still is the saying, 'waiting is more painful than death!' He could not restrain himself and grew more impatient about Jan Nisar's return. Only a week had passed since Jan Nisar had left but he anxiously looked towards the door again and again. From the tenth day he would stand by the door the whole day. Ibn-ul-Vaqt took him inside yet he would again come to the door. When Jan Nisar did not return on the fifteenth day, Noble Sahib was so disappointed that Ibn-ul-Vaqt too got worried. Even when Noble Sahib had lain wounded, he had shown a calm face but now his condition was changing fast for the worse. He was reduced to almost a shadow of his earlier self and had lost his appetite and sleep. He would pass the whole night tossing about in bed. At last, on the nineteenth day, Ibn-ul-Vaqt said to him, 'What do you think about Jan Nisar's delay?'

Noble Sahib replied, 'Well, what can I say? I have no reason to doubt his loyalty. You know how he stood by me in those horrible days. Maybe, they are thinking of some way to rescue me instead of replying my letter and thus they might have detained him to guide them here.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'I'm afraid to say it lest you should be disappointed, but I won't be surprised if Jan Nisar has not even reached the Camp yet.'

'Do you mean that my letter has been intercepted?' Noble Sahib asked, 'Oh no, that can't be! Jan Nisar is an intelligent man. He must have hidden it carefully and kept such secrecy

that nobody could have even suspected his having it. Moreover, he has such an appearance and manner that no one can take him to be a spy or an informer. No, no, I am fully confident that he has reached the Camp all right with the letter.'

'Have you any idea of what is going on in the countryside where loot and plunder is the order of the day?' asked Ibn-ul-Vaqt. 'All the roads are closed. A man by himself dare not go from one village to the other; and in such senseless conditions it is no wonder if a man is unjustly and most unfairly killed.'

Noble Sahib said, 'Had you told me this earlier I would have never thought of sending Jan Nisar. I am sorry I have risked his life for my personal gain.'

'Oh no, it is not that this has happened. I have spoken of only a possible danger, otherwise I know Jan Nisar is not the one to be taken in by those rustic hooligans. He might have stopped on the way because of some other obstacle. God willing, he will return soon,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'Do you really think so because of the delay or...?'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said with a laugh, 'No, actually a crow was cawing on the eaves of the house. As we do in our country, I took it as an omen and said to the crow, "Fly away at once if Jan Nisar is coming." No sooner had I uttered these words than the crow flew away.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt and Noble Sahib were thus talking together when there was a knock at the door. Ibn-ul-Vaqt at once said, 'Lo, thank God, Jan Nisar is here!' With these words he ran up to open the door. And Jan Nisar it was! Although Noble Sahib was at a distance, he asked him, 'Is it all right?'

Jan Nisar said paying him his respects as usual, 'Sir, may you be exalted, I have brought the reply.'

Noble Sahib was in such a hurry that he made it difficult for Jan Nisar to take out the letter from the sole of his shoe. The letter was taken out at last with great difficulty. As Noble Sahib perused it, Ibn-ul-Vaqt's eyes were fixed on his face which showed nothing but a look of thoughtfulness. Noble Sahib wanted to read it again but Ibn-ul-Vaqt put his hand over it and said, 'Kindly consider, we too have been waiting. The letter

won't go anywhere. First, please let us know in brief what it says. Then you may read it as many times as you please.'

Noble Sahib told them what the letter contained. 'It is not as satisfactory a reply as we wished it to be. They say: "So far we have been countering the attacks of the enemy. Big siege-guns have been ordered. We shall start our attacks when the guns reach here. Till then lie hidden where you are. When our bombs fall beyond the Jama Masjid or in the Fort, then you will know that the guns have reached here." They hope that the rebels will then soon run away. They also write, "Your man reached the Camp on the sixteenth day. He had to face many obstacles on the way as he told us. So, do not think of sending him again. There are hundreds of well-wishers of the Government among the Hindus and the Muslims in the city. News is regularly reaching us through them. Whenever possible, you shall be informed through one of them. Keep yourself alert and ready to come out. We have all the particulars and address of the gentleman you are staying with from your servant. Please convey to him as best as possible the gratefulness of the Government and of all the civil and military officers. We believe this will be much more appreciated than all the promises which may be easily made at the moment."'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt was pleased though Noble Sahib was disappointed. 'What better reply could there be? It is, indeed, most befitting, reasonable and appropriate.'

'But this idle life will certainly kill me.'

'If you were to die, there were many other occasions for it. But I assure you your life. I know you feel bored. You have already gone through so much trouble. But please put up with it for a little more time. I think you will have to stay here as our guest only for a month or so more.'

'More than a month!'

'Yes, but look, what a good pastime I have thought of for you to engage in!'

'What's that?'

'Writing down your memoirs of the Mutiny.'

'Ah, yes, it's a good idea, indeed. But most of the things I do not remember now.'

'You may write what you remember and if more is required, I have ready at hand a detailed day-to-day account. You may use it at your discretion. But just between you and me, these memoirs must not cause harm to anyone.'

'I do not know what the Government thinks about all this. As for me, I have been painfully hurt by the Mutiny. I could not go to England. God knows what my relatives and friends have made of themselves after taking me for dead? I was wounded. My life seemed to be lost. I lost all that I had saved during the last eleven years. It is now three months that I have been languishing here and I do not know for how much longer it is going to be like that. I do not know what has happened to my kinsmen and friends, whether they are living or dead. And still no one knows what vicissitudes I have to see till this tumult subsides. But in spite of all these tragic shocks, I think the people of this country, not all but most of them, were helpless to some extent. To my mind the Mutiny is a silly uprising. The Indian soldiers were mistaken in their estimate of the power of the Government. They thought that the East India Company had taken over this country with their help and that it owes its possession to them. Briefly speaking, the people, be it the general public or soldiers, must have been displeased with the rules and regulations of the Government. But Government officials too did not care for their displeasure. More than anything else, the Government tried to establish its reign of terror by the sword whereas the most essential condition of peaceful governance is the consent and pleasure of the subjects. It is sad that most of it, if not all, is lost and seeing the policy of the Government, its officials too did not at all care to soothe and win over the hearts of the people. In these conditions, the Company is, of course, the ruler of India but only in the sense as a lion is called the king of the jungle. I do not at all mean that the Mutiny had been brewing for a long time or that it was pre-planned, or was a result of any pre-meditation. Thus, if they accept my opinion, and this opinion insofar as that it is entirely personal, may not

be taken as worthy enough, but I understand that a prudent statesman, administrator and right-thinking man like the Governor-General will take all these factors into consideration and follow a policy of tolerance and forgiveness. Then alone will this fire die out. Steps in vengeance may be politically expedient to establish fear and the dignity of the Government but these should not become a general policy. Those who openly revolted and spread the revolt and fought the Government with arms and ammunition, those who planned to destroy the English Government, and those who unfairly and most unjustly killed the Englishmen or their womenfolk and children simply because they were English, only such people should be given severe punishment.'

'Now I am confident that my diary will be in safe hands. Here it is, take it, please.'

Noble Sahib passed a few weeks peacefully writing his memoirs, otherwise he had nothing to do but to wait and wait. Had he thus not engaged himself, he would have been fed up and left the house. He had not yet finished writing his memoirs and had only recorded the events of two months and twenty days or so after the Mutiny when the first bomb exploded in the Dīwān-e-'Ām, in the Fort at the time when the call was out for the nightfall prayers. The whole city was panic-stricken. Ibn-ul-Vaqt and Noble Sahib happened to be together at that moment. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was much alarmed to hear the explosion. He got up and said, 'Congratulations, Sir, on the conquest of Delhi and your safe passage to the English Camp. This sound is certainly from the Fort. Let me go and find out if Her Highness the Begum Sahib is all right, for, she trembles with fear even at the sound of the guns fired in the city. God knows where exactly it has exploded. May God preserve us!'

'Maybe it's a gun fired in the Fort,' said Noble Sahib.

'No Sir, when guns were mounted in the Fort, many of the Begums and even the princes, had presented themselves before the King and said, "Your Majesty, we are afraid the sound of the guns may frighten us, your humble servants, to death." His Majesty ordered then and there that the gunmen should keep themselves away on the fronts at the city walls.'

It was on the fifth day that Ibn-ul-Vaqt came back after performing the *phool*, the flower ceremony, of Nawab Mashuq Mahal Begum. As he saw Noble Sahib, his eyes filled with tears. Noble Sahib who had already come to know of her death, said, 'I am deeply grieved to learn of her sad demise. Whatever you told me about her shows that she was a very kind-hearted lady. That she passed away at such a time is clear proof of her being really fortunate. For, your Majesty, 'the Refuge of the World', had left nothing out to bring ruin to the house of Timur and the whole royal family and even the whole city with him. He desired to take a kingdom when he and his supporters were not even capable of taking care of their own house. He proved himself to be ungrateful and a traitor to the Government. He has thus made himself responsible for all the blood-shed that has occurred, or is presently occurring, or will occur, God knows how much more there will be because of the Mutiny.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'I do realise that it was fortunate for her to have passed away in such distressing times but, you know, she had been our benefactor-guardian for a long time. She and her ancestors had done our whole family a great many favours.'

In reply Noble Sahib said, 'Of course, remembering one's benefactor and patron-guardian is an essential condition of humanity and a mark of faithfulness. But I hope our Government too will prove at least that it is not lacking in appreciation of merit and sense of gratitude as compared with any authority of the Fort.'

The day they shelled the Royal Fort, the weakness of the rebel army and the panic of the citizens was clear to all. People started fleeing, leaving behind their homes and hearths and money and wealth. The shelling was so hard and constant that between the Calcutta and the Lahori Gates in the northern part of the city hardly a house was left unaffected by its intensity. Day and night only one unceasing sound was heard all round—the thundering sound of the explosion of bombs. By and by, people of Ibn-ul-Vaqt's locality also started to leave. It was then that he got very worried lest his womenfolk too should come to know of it and think of leaving the city. He spoke to Noble Sahib about it. He said, 'People living in the southern part of the city

need not fear or leave their place. All this shelling is only to frighten away the rebel army and that purpose has been already served. What would be the use of damaging more buildings and property? No, no, rest assured, here we are safe from the bombs. But if it so happens that I have to leave before the city is taken over, take care that you have provisions for about a week, stay at home and keep your doors closed. Entry of a victorious army into a fallen city is like a curse befalling it. No one who crosses its path can save himself. I hope I shall be able to arrange for your safety before the city is taken over.'

The next day when Ibn-ul-Vaqt went to the Fort he found that His Majesty, the King, too was preparing to leave. He thought that the English were likely to enter the Fort soon. After finishing his work there, he was coming back home when Yaqut, the chief personal attendant of the King called him. Coming up to him he said, 'It is good I found you here, Sir, otherwise I would have had to go to your place. This letter is for the Englishman who has been hiding in your house. Please give it to him.' With these words he took his leave and went away. Ibn-ul-Vaqt said to himself, 'To whom goes the credit for the king's moves? That he has not stepped out of the Fort for even a day is the extent of his gallantry. That even his chief personal attendant is in league with the enemy is the degree of his alertness. Why think of revolt then?'

Reaching his house he gave the letter to Noble Sahib. The letter said, 'Tomorrow we shall attack the city at 2 a.m. A lieutenant along with some English soldiers will wait for you at the *Takya* (the abode of the dervish, Bu Ali Shah), outside the Kabul Gate of the city between 8 p.m. and midnight. Take care you do not miss the opportunity.'

For many days after the Mutiny, the guards had kept such a close watch on the city gates that no one could pass through them without being thoroughly searched by them. People said it was to stop spying, but, in fact, it was nothing except harassment of the people. The position was that the five city gates from the Calcutta Gate to the Kabul Gate were totally closed. The Lahori Gate was open but only nominally because

for fear of bombardment no one dared go out of the city through it. Earlier too, there used to be more rush at the Delhi Gate and the Turkman Gate. But ever since the exodus began, it seemed the panic-stricken people of the whole city were flooding out through them. So, it was decided that at dusk as darkness sets in they should leave through Turkman Gate and going along the city wall, enter the Takya, the abode of the dervish. As long as Noble Sahib was with Ibn-ul-Vaqt, he would wear the Indian dress. He had a graceful figure and looked handsome in it. Taking Ibn-ul-Vaqt, his two servants, who were his confidants, and Jan Nisar with him, he at once started off in the same Indian dress he had worn. The only precaution he took was to cover his face with a piece of cloth as if he had sore eyes. Ibn-ul-Vaqt went along ahead of him holding his hand. It was each man for himself, as they say, for no one could think about the other. No one stopped or checked them and fearlessly they went out of the gate. Near Ajmeri Gate too there were only a few people who were lost in their own worries. They went ahead and met with no obstacles. It was all clear, though more desolate than a jungle, and more dreadful than a wilderness. The Takya was not yet clearly visible when a voice from afar said, 'Who comes there?' This meant the soldiers had arrived to receive Noble Sahib. When Noble Sahib said aloud 'Friends', Lieutenant Brave came forward. Noble Sahib also went quickly ahead and the two shook hands with each other. The accompanying white English soldiers hailed Noble Sahib with a loud 'Hurrah' on his deliverance. Noble Sahib briefly introduced Ibn-ul-Vaqt to Lt. Brave. The poor man could not speak Urdu at all. Noble Sahib interpreted for him: 'The Lieutenant expresses his thanks to you and invites you to come to the Camp.' Ibn-ul-Vaqt made an excuse that his family was alone without him to which Lt. Brave said, 'We shall meet again much before this hour the day after and perhaps I'll be the first one to stand a guard at your house.' With these words Lt. Brave took out two cheroots from his pocket, one of which he gave to Noble Sahib and the other to Ibn-ul-Vaqt. Lighting a matchstick he brought it before Ibn-ul-Vaqt. Ibn-ul-Vaqt thanked the Lieutenant

and giving the cheroot to Nobel Sahib said, 'You know I am not accustomed to this.' Ibn-ul-Vaqt said these words all right but little did he know what other things he would have to eat and drink in the company of the Englishmen. Noble Sahib expressed his gratefulness to Ibn-ul-Vaqt and saw him off. Jan Nisar accompanied Noble Sahib. Ibn-ul-Vaqt along with his servants entered the city through Khirki Farashkhana and walking inside along the city wall reached his house in a happy mood.

Very few people of Delhi had peace of mind in those days. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was one of the few who felt a little more secure. A short while ago Noble Sahib and Lt. Brave treated him with so much courtesy and politeness that he had raised a thousand hopes in his heart. The next day passed peacefully like any other day of the Mutiny. But just after midnight, it was as though Delhi was to see its last day. The English forces attacked the city on two sides. For some time the large cannons were fired in quick succession just like the lightning in heavy winter rains with its incessant flashes and ceaseless thunder. Then the guns opened fire. To Ibn-ul-Vaqt it sounded as if grains were being parched in a fireplace far away. As the day advanced, by 9 o'clock the intensity grew a little less but the rattling sound of musketry could still be heard here and there. It was said that the English soldiers had entered the houses everywhere and the mutineers were wandering confused hither and thither. No one could tell who was the victor. This was the situation by the time evening had set in. To tell the truth, even the day in the southern part of the city was as gloomy as the night. Here, even the oldest residents alive had lived all their lives in peace. None of them had dreamt of such battles. In their time if somebody was injured in a street fight, it became the talk of the whole city for several days. Now everybody had his own opinion. As many opinions as there were men! One said, 'Whatever was to happen, has come to be. The rebels will also flee in disgrace this night. Thank God, we shall have our fill of sleep.' Another prophesied, 'It's the aftermath of a battle which is more distressful. The Englishmen are much enraged and say that they shall raze the whole city to the ground.' The third would say, 'No, no, this can't be! If they

raze the whole city to the ground, whom shall they govern?' Still another said, 'It is not advisable to go out of one's house for a few days. They shoot at sight.'

4 The Aftermath—Ibn-ul-Vaqt's Plight

In Ibn-ul-Vaqt's house also, they were talking about similar things, but all the more. A quarter of the night had passed when they heard a loud sound of a horse's hooves and then of a rider dismounting. After a short while, someone called on Ibn-ul-Vaqt at the door. All of them wondered who could have come at that late hour. Through the door Ibn-ul-Vaqt found it was Jan Nisar. A bit excited, he asked him, 'Is the Sahib also there?'

Jan Nisar said, 'It is only I. The Sahib has sent me. He is on duty on the Koria Bridge Front and cannot leave it. He asked me to run up here to say, "All of us thought that the city would fall to us within a day but there are still some rebels to be dealt with. No one knows how many battles more will be fought within the city. On such occasions a friend cannot be told from a foe. Do not worry about your money and wealth. Leave the city at once tonight for your life. We shall meet when things are well under our control. Your locality will be under attack by dawn." '

Saying these words Jan Nisar hurriedly left leaving Ibn-ul-Vaqt stunned. After a while he collected himself and caused a great commotion by asking all of them to get ready and leave at once. It was night, there were the children to consider, and they had to leave the house suddenly taking nothing with them. All this was a difficult task, indeed. He had not yet disclosed anything about Noble Sahib to anyone in the house but now as they argued with him and showed reluctance to leave, he had to tell them the whole story. Life is dear to everyone. Sulky and sullen they left the house. They had hardly taken a few steps when there was a shelling of bombs like a hailstorm over the locality just as Jan Nisar had said.

Unwanted everywhere, they wandered outside the city from place to place for a full two weeks. Now they were at Kotla, now at Arab Sarai, now at Paharganj, and now at Qadam Shareef. Nowhere could they find a word of welcome. At last they came to know that the area of Khwaja Baqī-bi-'illāh was a peaceful one as the personal physician of the Maharaja of Patiala was staying there and security guards had been provided for him. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was not related to him but, as they say 'a drowning man catches at a straw', all of them proceeded to the place leaving aside all thoughts of honour and prestige with the hope that being a compatriot, he might help them. While some others were going on the main road, reeling and staggering, they avoided it. All of a sudden they saw some riders stopping the people. Some people tried to hide themselves. One rider galloped ahead. Coming to them he dragged the stronger ones onto the road. Actually the riders wanted them to carry their bundles of loot four miles away to Wazirabad where the troops were stationed. To the ease-loving Delhiites this distance seemed to be more than a thousand miles. But, as they say, 'all feel the strong man's thumb', and they had to obey. They were about to put a bundle on Ibn-ul-Vaqt's head too when suddenly like invisible spirits, a few English riders appeared. The people cried out to them, 'Look here, Sir, they are forcibly taking us.' It was just an accident that Noble Sahib happened to be one of the riders and Ibn-ul-Vaqt one of the persons who were being impressed. As soon as their eyes met, Noble Sahib dismounted and embraced him and said to his companions, 'He is the man who had sheltered me in his house.' All the other English riders dismounted and warmly shook hands with Ibn-ul-Vaqt. The others soon left but Noble Sahib stayed there and asked one of those who were impressing the people to run up to the *kotwāl* (the city police chief) and ask him to bring at once any bullock cart or carriage or whatever conveyance available.

It took three hours or so for the carriages to arrive and to reach their home. What a man, this Noble Sahib was! He did not leave till all the work was done. When Ibn-ul-Vaqt reached his house he found an army constable standing there on guard

and a big poster which warned that no one should damage the house in any way as it was the house of a Government well-wisher. What had happened was that after sending word to Ibn-ul-Vaqt through Jan Nisar, Noble Sahib had appointed the guard as soon as he could. None of the rebels or the citizens was responsible for the looting of the city for they had to save their own lives. But the Government soldiers and the menial staff of the army made a clean sweep of whatever they could find in the city. Not only did they lay their hands on things easily available, but they also dug up buried wealth. To Ibn-ul-Vaqt's house also, one after another they came but seeing the big poster and the army guard at the gate, they slinked away. Thus, not even a blade of straw was taken away from his house. They found everything there as they had left it.

5 Queen Victoria Assumes Reins—Ibn-ul-Vaqt Rewarded

Noble Sahib rehabilitated Ibn-ul-Vaqt in his house. Before leaving him he said, 'Though the whole city has been taken over, there is still some disorder in the adjacent villages. Most of the places are even now without police stations. The English officers are still extremely busy and a party is likely to be sent to Jhajjar tonight. I will not be surprised, if I also have to go there. Do not worry now and stay where you are. I'll myself send for you whenever I find an opportunity.'

In the evening Jan Nisar brought him a bag which contained a thousand rupees and said, 'The Sahib has sent it just to offer some relief.' For a long time after that, Ibn-ul-Vaqt had no news of Noble Sahib. Meanwhile, conditions in the city were relaxed so that the citizens could be rehabilitated. Many people preferred to stay where they were but in nearly all the localities most of them came back and settled in their houses. Then, peace was proclaimed. It was also proclaimed that Her Majesty the Queen had taken over the administration of the country from the

Company and that a grand function was to be held the next day. But still there was no news about Noble Sahib. An hour or so before sunset a peon of the Commissioner's office brought a letter for Ibn-ul-Vaqt. It was an invitation to attend the function. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was a bit worried about it and said to himself, 'I have never been to an English *darbār* (court), nor do I know any of the officials there. Should Noble Sahib have left me alone in such a situation?'

He diffidently went to attend the darbār. However, he felt at ease when he found that Noble Sahib was present there. This was the first time that he was seeing Noble Sahib in all his dignity. Scores of English officers and Heads of the Indian princely states (though they were no more the Heads now) were around him. He was very busy supervising the preparations for holding the court. He did not see Ibn-ul-Vaqt immediately but as soon as he saw him he came up to him and shaking hands with him said, 'I reached only at ten last night and I'm sorry but I've no time to talk to you just now.' Pointing towards a chair, he continued, 'This seat is marked for you. Kindly take your seat. Today and,' (a bit thoughtfully), 'tomorrow too, I won't be able to see you. Thereafter, of course, you may see me please, at your convenience at the residence of Mr Thomas between nine and eleven.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt had seen royal courts many a time before. All the pomp or grandeur they had in those days of spent glory, consisted of the bright clothes worn by the courtiers. And, these were generally old robes and old-fashioned woollens whereas a single carpet alone at this English Court must be worth the expenses of all the royal courts he had seen before. And then, who could guess the cost of all the things here—the grand marquee and other tents, chairs and tables, chandeliers and pictures? Only now Ibn-ul-Vaqt realised that real grandeur consisted in simplicity and cleanliness. Anyway, the Royal Proclamation was read out, first in English and then in Urdu. Three times the cannons were fired in salute from the Court, the Camp and the Fort. The orchestra played and presentations were made. Then, it was the turn of the well-wishers of the

Government to receive their rewards. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was proud of his actions but now he came to know that his was only the 125th position in the list of the well-wishers in the city alone. When his name was called, he was presented before the Commissioner who gave him a certificate under the seal of the Viceroy. It granted him land in Village Khairkapur (Khairkhwahpur), District Gurgaon, taken out of the confiscated estate of Nadan Singh Jat, a rebel *zamīndār* (land-holder), and which yielded Rs 3,000 a year. Noble Sahib made a felicitating gesture to him from behind the Commissioner.

On the day the Mutiny was quelled in Delhi, it became the talk of the city that Ibn-ul-Vaqt had become a well-wisher of the English Government. Today's darbār publicised it all the more. Some of his relatives and friends who were still staying like gypsies outside the city came back and some prepared to return as they now expected support from him. But he was as cold, blunt and harsh as the Englishmen. He was congenial, entertaining, cheerful and a pleasant companion only if you met him without any ulterior motives of self-interest. But the moment you requested any personal favours, he would just give a flat refusal as if he had hit you on the head with a stone. Probably, the people would not have been so displeased with him had he politely told them that the Englishmen actually got irritated by recommendations in matters of litigation, or that he felt reluctant to make a direct recommendation, or that he would say a word or two in recommendation whenever he found an opportunity. But his behaviour was entirely different. He was so touchy that he was unapproachable. The moment anyone requested him for any favours he would get irritated. Thus, people started to abhor him for his discourtesy but their attitude was one of: 'I do not expect any good from you, but at least do not insult me.' However, they would stick to him for favours. If for nothing else, they would make an excuse to visit him to flatter him, 'You showed wonderful courage. You rescued an Englishman from the magazine amidst such tumult and sheltered him in your own house. It sounds like flattery to say this before you but the truth is you surpassed even Rustam, the proverbial

hero of Persia.' Another would say, 'Well, chivalry is one thing, but the surprising thing is the fact that an Englishman was kept hidden in the centre of the city under the very noses of the *mujāhidīn* (the holy warriors), that is, under the shadows of the walls of the Khānqāh, and not a single soul knew of it.' Still a third would say, 'But just see how poorly the Englishmen have appreciated it. The reward they have given him for putting his life in danger is only a piece of land yielding a mere three thousand rupees a year. My dear Sir, these are tasks worth bestowing a whole kingdom. Oh that the great Mughal Emperor Shahjahan (d. 1661 A.D.) were living today!' And a fourth one said, 'But nothing definite can be said yet. The English have no custom of making land grants. Maybe, they will make him a Deputy Collector or a Chief Justice or an Ambassador to Kabul, or else appoint him a minister in a native state. They may do anything they like. And, I feel it in my heart they will. I am telling you!'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt was not a fool to be susceptible to open flattery but the people, shrewd as they were, said all this in a subtle way, as though, administering sugared poison and he was duped by them and wished to earn their compliments by narrating the events of the Mutiny to everyone who visited him. When the people had stirred him enough they would ask him casually, 'Well, Sir, what kind of dress did the Englishman put on?'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt's reply would be: 'When we picked him up from among the dead bodies, his clothes were smeared in blood. He was unconscious and none of us knew where he was wounded. We tried to tear away his clothes but they were so coarse and thick that we had to cut them with a pair of scissors. As long as he stayed with us, he put on the Indian dress just like us but he would say, not sarcastically but by way of advice, "Alas, Indians do not use their commonsense. Look at our clothes. For years together they do not wear out. And, yours are so fine that they soon give way. Such fine clothes are more appropriate for women. God has made men stronger because they have to put in hard work and labour. The Indian dress is proof of the laziness and ease-loving nature of Indians. As I see it, one cannot remain active and alert in such a dress." '

One of the audience asked, 'What arrangements had you made for his food?'

'What arrangements? He took with us whatever we prepared except that we saw to it that no chillies were put in his food. Table salt and pepper were served separately along with his meals. Of the Indian dishes he liked *pulā'o, kabāb, samosa, firnī* and other light sweet dishes.

A visitor asked, 'You must have kept separate utensils for him?'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'Well, to tell you the truth, we did not do that. The food was ours, the utensils were ours and we were the cooks. So, what was the need of keeping separate utensils?'

The visitor said, 'But, he is an Englishman!'

'Of course, he is an Englishman. So what? We did not serve any forbidden food,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt emphatically.

The visitor realised that his words were unpleasant to Ibn-ul-Vaqt and as he had his own interest to seek, he kept quiet. But after this event people avoided sharing their meals with Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

6 At the Dining Table

Noble Sahib had already told Ibn-ul-Vaqt at the darbār when and where he would be available. On the third day after adjourning his court, Ibn-ul-Vaqt reached the house of Mr Thomas, as advised. The house was like a camp in itself. On his enquiring he was told that Noble Sahib lived in the yellow bungalow that had a separate enclosure. He found many carriages of visitors at the outer gate. Inside the enclosure there was a small garden in perfect symmetry with the courtyard. It was beautiful, well arranged and very well kept and as many as four gardeners were at work in such a small garden. The freshness of the plants and trees, clean avenues and streamlined paths showed that the gardeners were busy not only because they

were employed to maintain the garden but also because they were really devoted to their work. But then, the shape and design of the flower beds and the choice of trees showed remarkable good taste and aesthetic sense hardly expected of a gardener. Walking through the garden, Ibn-ul-Vaqt went into the verandah. A crowd of visitors was standing on both sides. Some of them were sitting on chairs, some on the floor and some (perhaps the petitioners) were standing with their folded hands hanging down. Noble Sahib's servants already knew Ibn-ul-Vaqt. They stood up to salute him and showed him further consideration by seating him in a separate room. After a short while an attendant came and told him, 'The Sahib has been informed of your arrival.'

'What does he say?'

'Sir, you see there are already so many visitors who have come before you.'

'Do you mean I'll have my turn after them?'

'The Sahib will give them only four or five minutes each; and since he has been informed of your arrival, he will hurriedly see them off. As a matter of fact, Sir, our Sahib is too gentle a person to refuse to meet a visitor. He is so generous which is why we do not get any time; otherwise we would have presented ourselves much earlier at your place to pay our respectful salaams. On Sunday all the servants will present themselves. They are eagerly looking forward to it.'

Meanwhile, as Noble Sahib had been informed of Ibn-ul-Vaqt's arrival, he was hurriedly disposing off the visitors one by one by having only a few words with them. Even then Ibn-ul-Vaqt had to wait for nearly half an hour. The first time he had met Noble Sahib, he was not aware of his position. Later, whenever he saw him, there was an air of dignity about him lent by his status and the honour of his being a part of the British Empire. On Khwaja Baqī-bi-'illāh street when he was just to be impressed and loaded with a bundle on his head, he had seen Noble Sahib riding on an Arabian horse followed by a retinue of Englishmen. Then he had seen him in the darbār, supervising the arrangements as the head of all the Englishmen. And this time he saw him at his residence where there were so many

carriages of visitors at his gate and scores of noblemen of the city who waited to pay their respects. Besides, he had a large number of domestic servants. It seemed as if the enclosure was itself a small quarter of a city. Many carriages of all sorts were parked outside from one end to the other and all the rooms of the bungalow were well furnished with carpets, curtains and screens, tables and chairs, chinaware and other things of comfort and decoration. Only a few days ago during the Mutiny, no room in this bungalow was left with its roof intact and now within two months, the whole place had been rebuilt, given a new colour and provided with every household item. As they say, 'government is itself half a miracle'. A garden was also laid. In short, everything was there where before there had been nothing. Four attendants and one *jamadar*, their head, that is, five men were in attendance at the door adjacent to the Sahib's room to carry out errands at the slightest call. Though Ibn-ul-Vaqt had no opportunity before to see this authority of Noble Sahib's, yet he had always believed that even if a thousand such mutinies were to occur, the English rule would not be overthrown. Rather the administration would be all the more stable and permanent. He knew quite well that perchance if an Englishman, or even a Eurasian, should appear to be like a meek cat, he was, in fact, a powerful lion; he knew that during the Mutiny, behind the clouds of mere dirt and dust there was a mighty rider.

But Ibn-ul-Vaqt was so full of his self-worth that he did not see that persons who deserved priority over him in respect, honour and power and perhaps in their good wishes too, were seated in the verandah whereas he was given a seat in a separate room. Nor did he realise that those who had come earlier than him should meet Noble Sahib before he did. Within half an hour he was tired of waiting. Again and again he would harshly ask the attendants, 'How many visitors remain now? Are you sure that you made no mistake in informing him of my arrival?' or 'Does he really know that it is I?' In his vanity he thought it shameful for him to be asked to wait, and in order to shake off the feeling of shame he walked up and down the room and looked at the pictures and other things. Though he did not upset

the order of things, the attendants were not at all pleased to see him taking such liberties.

In whispers they said to each other, 'He is a strange man. He cannot even sit quietly. We shouldn't have seated him in a separate room.'

'Talk sense, my dear fellow. Do you know who he is? Our Sahib stayed in his house during the Mutiny. Had I seated him in the verandah and had the Sahib seen him there, all of us would have been reprimanded,' said the head attendant.

'His wishing well is all right,' said an attendant. 'Many many thanks for it, but shouldn't there be any respect for the Government? Rich men, nobles, rajas, bābūs, nawābs, zamīndārs, all of them come here to see the Government officers. However close and free they may be with the Sahib inside the room, outside we have seen they behave in only one way—hands folded, heads down, in respectful silence. Why, only yesterday didn't you notice the Nawāb of Loharu? He was here in this very room waiting for the Sahib who was a bit late. When he coughed, he put his head out of the window with a hankie over his mouth lest it should echo in the room. And, when I asked if I should bring the spittoon he gestured in the negative.'

'Never mind, maybe he has had no opportunity to see the English officers before,' the head attendant said.

'If I go to him to pay my respects, I will certainly tell him this,' remarked the attendant.

'No, no! Why should this worry you so much?'

'Worry I should, because he is so close to our Sahib. He may visit him here every third or fourth day, if not daily. And, you know one or two English officers are always staying here with our Sahib. One Englishman is so bad-tempered that he just hates the sight of a black man. If he sees such bad manners, he might give him a good beating—either blows with his fists or kicks with his boots—not only him but us also.'

Meanwhile, they heard the sound of Noble Sahib's footsteps. He was coming out. The attendants and all those visitors whom he could not meet, became alert. Those who had come out of the room talking with him took their leave. All the others he

politely saw off as it was already late. He went into the room where Ibn-ul-Vaqt was waiting. The very first words he said to him were: 'I am sorry you had to wait for so long. Actually, passing secret information has come to be a rage in your city these days. Even one who has not done anything against the Government is worried, lest someone should make a false report about him to the Government. The officials too have a strict attitude. That is why the people are all the more worried.' Ibn-ul-Vaqt wanted to say something but Noble Sahib said, 'I have to talk about so many things and it will take long. The table has been laid. Let us talk over the meal.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt replied, 'Well, you see, I am not so punctual about meals. Do please go ahead. I'll take my meal at home. It is not yet too late.'

Taking Ibn-ul-Vaqt along to the dining room Noble Sahib said with a smile, 'Why, do you have any objection in taking your meal with me? I am the same Noble with whom you dined for months together and as you know very well I was a Christian at that time just as I had been before the Mutiny and as I am now and God willing, shall remain one till my last breath.'

'No, personally I have no hitch or objection to it but the people think it is bad,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'But, what do you personally think about it?'

'I do not see anything bad in it at all.'

'It is this weakness alone which has ruined India. They have always been weak and subjected as though God has given them a weak and subdued nature. And, so long as this weakness is there in their nature, they will continue to remain so.'

It was as though he was pushing Ibn-ul-Vaqt towards anglicism particularly as he was already inclined towards it. As soon as Noble Sahib gestured to him to take his seat, he came forward and planted himself on a chair. This was like a baptism —not into Christianity but into anglicism. Fortunately there was no Englishman at the table at that time as all of those who were staying there had gone out on a hunting trip. Only Noble Sahib was there otherwise they would have made good fun of Ibn-ul-Vaqt. Owing to his ignorance he did so many silly things

at the dining table that it was only a sober man like Noble Sahib who could tolerate this and did not laugh at him, nor was displeased with him. Though the servants saw it all and could make fun of him none of them even dared to give a faint smile for fear of Noble Sahib. They saw him doing silly things but only cast sidelong glances at one another. But they must have laughed their heads off when they retired to their quarters. The most silly thing he did was that he took the fork in the right hand and the knife in the left. When Noble Sahib told him to hold it the other way round, he held the fork in the left hand but rubbed the knife so vigorously on the fork that it became blunt. One of the servants gave him another knife from the table. Then he tried to eat a potato. Fortunately it fell on the table cloth. Every time he tried to put anything into his mouth with the help of the fork he failed hopelessly. He could not eat without smearing his nose, chin and cheeks, in fact, his whole face. Had anyone seen his face after he had eaten the meal he would have certainly made fun of him and been reminded of the cup* at the *Diwali* festival. From the hissing sounds he made, one could easily guess that he had pricked his lips or gums or tongue or elsewhere with the fork. Then, the first time when the attendant wanted to remove the used plates, he thought the whole table would be removed and was about to say something but the attendant, a knowing man, took away the used plate saying that he would bring a fresh one. Six or seven plates were thus changed during the course of the meal but our brave man did not put the knife and the fork on the plate to be taken away until the attendant himself asked for it. When the attendant brought the first dish in a large bowl before him, he took it from him and holding it at both ends, put it before himself on the table together with the ladle. The attendant politely bent over him and whispered, 'You may please take as much as you want from it and put it in your plate.' The pudding was to be eaten

---

*A small earthen, brimmed cup splashed with water colour, without a handle in which plain and/or sweetened parched rice is put to be distributed after worshipping the goddess Lakshmi.

using a fork and tasty as it was, he just ate it up with a spoon and then asked for more. The last most foolish and silly thing he did was to drink the water from the finger bowl.

Some of Ibn-ul-Vaqt's actions were in fact highly improper but look at the fineness of Noble Sahib. He sat through it all with his head lowered, and feigned that he had not seen anything at all. With downcast eyes, he observed everything and must have regretted his having insisted that they share the meal. And his regrets must have disturbed him. But how could it be possible not to invite him as it was time for lunch, and Ibn-ul-Vaqt, after all, was his saviour. It was only proper to invite him to lunch. In fact, it was a must, he thought and said to himself, 'Anyway, the lunch has provided a new opportunity. It is fortunate that there is no other Englishman here otherwise he would have forever teased me by mimicking Ibn-ul-Vaqt.' It must have been owing to these thoughts perhaps, that Noble Sahib said nothing at the dining table, though he was well known everywhere in the Camp for his company at the table. After the lunch Noble Sahib gestured to a servant to take Ibn-ul-Vaqt to the bathroom to wash his hands. There, in the large mirror on the table, Ibn-ul-Vaqt saw his image and at once he was reminded of the couplet from the poet Insha 'allah Khan:

> The saint among the drunkards come
> They fell on him all round
> His beard they knot with gum,
> And as drum his body pound!

However, he gave himself a wash and making himself presentable be came back to Noble Sahib. Ignorance is bliss. He did not even find it necessary to apologise for all the silly things he had done. Noble Sahib had already lighted his pipe. Putting the cigarette case before him, he said, 'This tobacco is from Turkey and much lighter than that of the cheroot. You may safely take it. If you smoke it for a few days, you will forget your *huqqa* (water-pipe) for smoking tobacco. I smoke a pipe in the morning and evening and after a meal, while at other times I smoke only these cigarettes.' Ibn-ul-Vaqt had tasted sugar, how could he now

shun the sweet cakes. With a matchstick he lighted a cigarette and like a steam engine profusely started to emit smoke.

Noble Sahib said, 'After our meeting in Khwaja Baqī-bi-'illāh, I remained out of the city. One day, the Chief Commissioner called me to Karnal and made lengthy enquiries about the events that took place during the Mutiny. We also talked about you in this connection. I was much surprised to know that he knows much more about you and your domestic affairs and all your near and distant relatives than I do. He has an index of their names and a chronological record of their activities during the Mutiny—sheltering the "holy" warriors in their homes, collecting funds for them, providing them arms, food and clothes, co-operating with them in raising batteries, plundering arms and ammunition from the Government arsenal depots and stores and the books of the Government College, demolishing the buildings owned by Englishmen, enjoying the killings of the English people, inciting the people to revolt, openly praying for the end of the English rule after saying the prayers and devotional exercises and the recitation of the Qur'an and all such things. He knows (God knows who has told him) all these things in detail. He has the original copies of duly signed *fatwās* (religious decrees of jihād), copies of personal letters of people and of all the royal records. In short, it is a lost case for all of them. As far as I see, there will hardly be a Muslim in Delhi who can defend himself against the charges of revolt. It is really a difficult situation.'

'I hope you did not mention my personal diary, or did you?' asked Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

Noble Sahib replied, 'Had you seen all those writings which I have seen you would have yourself realised that to make a mention of your diary would have been not only frivolous and of no use but also a proof of foolishness. My dear Sir, who knows how many such diaries have been submitted to the Government and how many persons were appointed to write the day-to-day events.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt observed, 'It means then that holding a court to try cases and the proclamation of general peace and all these promises are absurd and false.'

'Oh no! A mutiny or revolt is not child's play. It would have

had baneful consequences for India. In fact, Her Majesty the Queen and the Governor-General have shown much restraint and toleration, unlike the common English people who are even now so enraged that the shedding of the blood of all the Indians as revenge for a drop of an Englishman's blood would not satisfy them. But they cannot have their way as they are helpless against the Royal Command, otherwise they would have razed the entire city to the ground. Nobody would have even known where the city of Delhi had stood. It was only because of the proclamation that whatever control was there came to be as long as fighting continued in the city or during the two or three days thereafter. But now all life and property are safe. The only thing is that, on the whole, the Muslims of Delhi have made themselves suspect in the eyes of the Government. Now it is they who have to prove their innocence and peacefully settle in their homes.'

'I do not know about others but our family has brought ruin to itself for nothing,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt. 'They had honourably left, breaking all ties with the city, but as bad luck would have it, they came back after hearing of my being a well-wisher of the Government. There is so much strictness in Delhi and its neighbourhood that it seems that those who have gone far away from Delhi are comparatively in peace. But then, why should I care? I will plainly tell them to leave and go wherever they like. The Government does not realise that there is a great difference between the royal retainers and the common English subjects. After all, what rights did the Government have on the royal retainers that it expected loyalty and good wishes from them? Then, when the Fort was ruined, all the royal retainers too were ruined with it through no fault of their own. Was this punishment not enough for them that they are now called to account for all sorts of things?'

Noble Sahib said, 'To tell you the truth, this is what I pleaded on behalf of your relatives and it is gratifying to note that the higher-ups there patiently listened to it. The Chief Commissioner fully agreed with me and said, "The Government has decided to establish a separate department of investigation about the Mutiny. I wish to appoint you the Commissioner of

its Delhi wing because your views totally agree with what the Government wants." How could I say no? I respectfully obeyed him, and I shall take up my job on the first of the month.'

'Ah, this is *the* news! Had the Muslims of Delhi known you as I do, they would have rejoiced greatly over it, otherwise despite the Government's standing orders, the District Officers in their personal wrath would have made life quite miserable.'

'You may have an idea of the general mood of the common English people from the fact that recently when some of them were talking together about your being a well-wisher of the Government, their hostility was apparent and they were quite suspicious about it. They said, "We simply cannot understand why a person who has no concern with the English Government and whose family clearly shows an intense religious prejudice, sheltered you in his house. A person of such a family cannot be a true well-wisher. Then, it is to be noted that even after giving you shelter he did not like to contact the English Government. Leave aside that, he did not personally go to the Camp, he did not even put an application for it, nor did he send anyone on his behalf. Except for the fact that he sheltered you in his house, he has not done any other act worthy of a well-wisher. There is something wrong in the whole affair. We feel that he kept you alive simply with the intention to pressurise the Government all the more. Had Delhi not fallen to us, he would have certainly killed you most callously." So, what can one say about the narrowness of those who have such views, and how can the subjects have any hope of security from such officials?'

'It is true that I did not shelter you in my house because I wished well for the English Government. I and none of my family members have had any contact with the English Government except that I had studied at a Government College for a few years. For generations together, we have been the genial retainers of the King of Delhi. I performed a human duty in sheltering you in my house, and that is all. I have not claimed any compensation or reward for it. Nor do I have any right or claim to it. Whatever little kindly treatment I gave you, though I feel embarrassed to use these words, you have paid me back

many times more. I had hardly spent fifty rupees on you but you sent me a thousand rupees. The trouble I took in rescuing you from the magazine and keeping you with me and then taking you to the Takya, was not even a fraction of the trouble which you took in taking me and my family away from Khwaja Baqī-bi-'illāh. All my services are just nothing against the favour you did by saving us from the disgrace of being used as menial workers. In fact, you have personally done me so many favours that if I should consider myself noble enough, I should remain grateful to you all my life. And, this estate which the Government has undeservedly granted me is also due to your efforts.'

Noble Sahib said, 'There is a great difference between you and me. You took great pains in sheltering me without any personal interest. Well, let that pass for as they say "friendship knows no debit or credit". Let us talk about something more important. I have seen village Khairkapur which you have been granted. I have been there several times on hunting trips with the Collector of Gurgaon. It has a small pasture land and a very big tank. It yields a good produce of wheat, rice, sugarcane, cotton, indigo, etc. Nadan Singh, who owned this village, met me once. He lived there with dignity. His residential place is itself like a small fort. He was very fond of mares and buffaloes. The mares he rode were worth a thousand rupees each. In short, he was one of the very prosperous landlords of Gurgaon. He had many villages but he himself said, "God has made the land of Khairkapur very fertile." He ungrudgingly spent his wealth and life in the welfare of Khairkapur and lived like a raja because he received a good revenue from this village. Anyway, even if there is some exaggeration as regards his reported income, and generally people are always generous in estimating the income of others and miserly in estimating their own, the land-holders of Gurgaon are satisfied with the revenues of their district. Even in villages where the revenue is more difficult to obtain, there is always a profit after meeting the collection charges. As such, you will not get less than the salary of an Extra Assistant. I had two things in my mind when I selected this village for you. Firstly, it is near Delhi, and secondly, a railway track is to be laid in this

area. Thus, there will be more development. I consciously did not try to get a job for you because I always find most of the honour-seeking Indians complaining about the favours and honours given by the English Government. And, if you so wish for a job, I am always there to help you.'

To this Ibn-ul-Vaqt's reply was: 'I have repeatedly submitted that for generations together we have been the genial retainers of the Royal Courts. The favours and honours of those courts meant that all services, high or low, were hereditary. What a sense of assuredness it gave the retainers, who did not have to worry about their means of livelihood and that of their descendants as well. Just by way of actual facts I wish to tell you some of their rules and norms—right or wrong, necessary or unnecessary—whatever you may make of them. Penalty, suspension or dismissal was unheard of in the whole Fort. Favours, honours and rewards were limitless. The house of Timurlane never behaved miserly in the dispensation of wealth. Royal favours being hereditary, some of the genial retainers received a few pice as their salary or stipend owing to division and sub-division from generation to generation. Besides, the stipend was so uncertain that they often received it after a lapse of two or three years. The value of most of the salaries and stipends was like that of a sacred relic. The employees lived merely on the liberality and bountiful favours of the Government. But those few pice were so dear to the retainers that it is well known that the *Sadr us Sadoor* (Chief Judge), Mufti Sadruddin Khan of Delhi had a stipend of two and a half or three rupees. When Khwaja Mahbub Ali Khan, the Paymaster-General, issued an order to reduce the amount of salaries and stipends, he struck off the Mufti's name from the list of the royal retainers. The Mufti was after all a Mufti. Even his personal attendants would not have cared for the paltry three rupees. But as soon as he learnt of it, he went up to the King in supplication and did not take his leave until his stipend was restored. In short, the Governments of the Fort treated their employees as their children. Such were the Governments I have served. As such, I do not think I'll be able to serve under the English Government.'

7 A Deputy Collector's Complaints

Ibn-ul-Vaqt tells Noble Sahib about his brother-in-law who is a Deputy Collector. He was on leave for one year to take the Haj pilgrimage and is now due to return in a day or two. He is a bit short tempered and does not get along well with any Collector. The poor man is thus transferred twice or at least once a year. Sometimes he comes to meet Ibn-ul-Vaqt. In the conditions, as he tells him, it is difficult for a man of his temper to carry on even for a day in the service of the English Government. Once, when Ibn-ul-Vaqt asked him if he had saved any money he said, 'For God's sake, do you know what you are talking about? Only God knows how I cut and save and how frugally I carry on so that I may not have to borrow. It is these frequent transfers that just strip me off, otherwise, thank God, my salary is enough to meet my expenses. Rather, I save something, however little, out of it.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'Indeed, you hardly stay in one place for a year. But why is this so? There are other deputies after all. For years together they stick to one place like "the axis which never leaves its place", as they say.'

'God knows what marvellous work they do. I try to please my officers as much as I can, but bad luck as I have, there is always some unpleasantness. Frequent transfers have also given me a bad name. Just mention my name and they will call me the quarrelsome Deputy Collector.'

'But you have not told me exactly why the officers are displeased with you. If I found you to be a wealthy man, I would have thought that you might have taken bribes.'

'As a matter of fact, I never take bribes, and a sensitive or quick-tempered person like me would never be able to take it.'

'I am given to understand that the Englishmen get irritated

by the very word "bribe", but as you say, the matter seems to be the other way round.'

'To be truthful, I have never come across an Englishman who takes bribes. I have never given a bribe to any Englishman, nor have I heard anyone doing so. Do you know the biggest bribe you can give an Englishman? Only a basket of fruits, or provisions if he is on a tour, or arranging for a horse-cart for post-relays or elephants for his hunting expedition, or occasional gifts made by a chosen few. But I cannot call these bribes as such. As far as the provisions are concerned, it is more the wickedness of the servants who take twice as much as required, even from an English officer, and get away with the greater part of it. Even the officer does not come to know of it. Maybe, sometimes a thrifty or frugal memsahib, deducts nominally a few pice from items like eggs and chickens, and it is also not unusual if fuel wood and grass are not paid for because it is well known that the *tehsīldār* (sub-collector of revenue), and the *thānedār* (keeper of the police station), get these things free from the village. And, even if payment is made for these things, not a single paisa of it goes to the real owners. I would again say that Englishmen do not take bribes. But the orderlies, attendants, menial servants and the office staff take away much more than what would have gone to the sahibs as bribes. And, these very persons are the eyes and ears or spirits or whatever you may call them, of an English officer. If someone like me does not win over these evil spirits or rascals, no official, however high, will command any respect in spite of all his power and authority and high salary. If I wish, I can win over these menial servants of the English officers by spending a little money but I am so disgusted by them that although I spend quite a big amount on my two carriages, many personal attendants and servants, house rent, newspapers, food and clothes, and hundreds of rupees I donate annually to hospitals and *madrasas*, schools, etc.—yes, I gladly meet all these expenses—yet I am not inclined to spend a single rupee on a gift of a basket of fruits in the name of a reward or tip to the menials. It is quite long since I have been in service and I have met hundreds of Englishmen, high and low. But I

do not remember if I have ever gone to see any one of them with pleasure or if I have ever been pleased to meet an Englishman. I meet them but only under a compulsion to protect myself, so to say, lest I be taken for an arrogant man or the staff and orderlies who are always displeased with me should find an opportunity to slander me. I have also come into contact with some very noble Englishmen who have, in all fairness, benefited me on the basis of my efficiency and I am really grateful to them. But owing to the general attitude of the Englishmen I am so disgusted by them that even with those who have done me favours, I have kept contact only while I worked under them. I do not remember whether even once I have corresponded with any of them after my transfers. I avoid English officers so much that I have to persuade myself for weeks together to meet them when I feel that it has been too long since I last met them. And look, when I thus force myself and somehow reach there what do I find? The same unpleasantness, the same disrespect, as ever! Though an Indian deputy or some other Indian even more respectable than him, may go on a four-horse carriage to meet only a Eurasian Deputy Collector, not the Collector and or the Joint or Assistant Collector, who are higher in rank, (and how can one avoid meeting them?)—and whether it is in winter or it is raining or it is in the scorching heat or during the mighty *loo* (hot wind), he has to get down well before the enclosure. And, the enclosure too is as large as a devil's gut. Old persons like us have to gasp for breath by the time we reach the residential block. If the officer sees us gasping for breath, we know that we have gone to meet him only to sacrifice our jobs, for, on the same day a report is made that this person cannot even walk a short distance. It means that to be a Deputy Collector it is necessary that one should be able to go at a gallop, if not a trot, like a postman from one place to the other with papers in hand. So, with this fear lurking in his mind he stops for fifteen minutes to half an hour to catch his breath behind a tree or in the kitchen or stable if he has a full purse and has settled with the menial servants. After that he wipes the sweat off his face with a handkerchief, tidies his beard, sets his headgear

right, holds the hem of his cloak and thus gives himself a cultured look. Then, with hands folded and eyes lowered and fear in his heart he stealthily proceeds towards the residential block. The attendants and the orderlies have already marked his arrival outside the enclosure. Seeing him going towards the residential block, they deliberately keep away. The poor fellow stays for a while near the stairs to find out if anyone is there so that he may go upstairs. He incessantly hears all sorts of sounds and noises of walking, talking and of things being moved, but he sees no one there. At last, the helpless man takes courage, takes off his shoes and goes upstairs unbidden. He finds no chairs, or stools, or carpet. He just stands and stares. What should he do? "Shall I go back?", he says to himself. Then, with the thought that the English officer would then see him going from the mirrors inside, he starts to walk up and down in that small room to overcome the feeling of shame. Meanwhile he sees someone coming out of the kitchen. He is pleased as he thinks that he will now know the whereabouts of the officer and his orderlies. But the man hurriedly goes into another room, and takes no notice of the poor fellow.

'In short, for half an hour or so (which seems like two hours) he is kept waiting. Thank God, here comes a peon with a letter in his hand. What can the poor fellow do? As they say "in times of need one gives even an ass the respect given to one's father". Leaving aside all sense of reserve and self-respect, he begs his attention saying, "Well, sir, is there any hope of seeing the Sahib?" The peon responds, as you may assume, out of respect for the Deputy Collector or fear of a complaint being made against him, but, I know it is neither; it is only due to the fact that a deputy collector is entrusted with the criminal cases of the city and the fellow thinks, "God knows when I may need him." He half-heartedly raises his hand in salute as though driving away a fly, and idly says, "Today being the day of foreign post, there is little chance of your seeing the Sahib. At the moment the Sahib is in the bath but please take your seat." With these words when he is about to leave again, the poor fellow cannot help himself and asks the peon, "Where should I take my seat,

eh?" Thus, he (the head servant) brings him a broken chair with no back and one of its arms missing. It looks like a three-legged stool. From then on, whenever a peon or a servant comes out, the only information he gives is that the Sahib is still in the bath. (Oh God, is he washing a dead body?) Now he is changing his dress, now he is in the memsahib's room, now he is writing a letter, and then finally, he is at the breakfast table. At these words the poor fellow's heart sinks, for, how can there be a meeting now? Again he thinks of going back home but then he says to himself, "I have been waiting for so long, I will have to come here again after all. How can I be sure that the Sahib will see me tomorrow? Why should today's efforts go to waste? Let me patiently wait for another hour or so."

'After a long while the peon comes with an order for the Court Reader to read out the report to the Sahib. So, whatever little hope there was, is lost. He makes a long face, gets up and says to the peon, "Well, now I am leaving. Please inform the Sahib." God knows what comes to the peon's mind. He says, "Twice I have informed the Sahib but he said nothing. Now I will go and tell him again. But if he is displeased, kindly ensure my daily sustenance." At long last, the poor fellow is called in. He finds the Sahib walking with his pipe in his mouth. It means that no satisfactory meeting can be held with him. Or else, he finds him perusing some book or a paper. The poor fellow cannot think of any way to make the Sahib aware of his presence. He says to himself, "He is aware of me; perhaps he has deliberately kept me waiting. But then I doubt that he was really informed. The peon might not have properly informed him. But these are glass doors. I came through the front door, walked under the trees and I sat in the verandah for a long time. All the while did he not see me once?" Meanwhile, the Sahib himself lifts his head. And, you know, if one higher up than you welcomes you, you must be grateful to him. The officer does not show any lack of respect. Just as their eyes meet, he gestures him to take the chair opposite him. Well, who does not know how to sit on a chair in his own house or at a friend's house? But I have already seen how the Indian Chief Judges and

Deputies getting higher salaries than me, sit on the chairs before the English officers. Though I sit on the chair I swear my behind does not even touch the cane. You are a human being, believe me, I just sat suspending myself like a rose-tailed sparrow on its perch. However, no sooner had my shadow fallen on the chair than the wretched peon said with folded hands, "The Reader is present here." The Sahib with his eyes on me tells him, "*Achchhā ānе bolo*", that is, "Well, ask him to come in." Good God, for seven years he has been an Assistant and for nine years a Joint Collector and during all these sixteen years only once did he go to England on long leave for one and a half years. But as they say "for twelve years one lived in Delhi but the Urdu language one did not learn". Just see, in the fourteen long years how much proficiency he has attained in Urdu! *Achchhā ānе bolo*! Anyway, now I wait for him to speak to me so that I may respond. But meanwhile, the wretched Court Reader is ushered in followed by a peon with a wrapped bundle of papers and the pen-and-ink case. Now look, just before the Reader begins what does the Sahib say to me, "Well, *garmī bahut*" (it is too hot). Lowering my head I say, "Yes, Sir, this is the hot season. According to the police report in my district there have been several deaths owing to this loo." While I say all this to the Sahib, in my heart, I say to him, "Well, you know all about this scorching heat but my dear unrelenting fellow, even for fear of God you did not take mercy on me. You never gave a thought to the one you kept burning on your verandah, who is entitled by the Government to sit behind a screen of fragrant *khas* (grass) in his office (and if the wretched caretaker gets it made out of three-year-old grass, I leave it to his conscience) and has the means to use khas at his residence and actually uses it too all through the hot season. And, it did not occur to you to relieve him after accepting his salutations!"

'I had thought that the Sahib would be startled to learn of the deaths caused by heatstroke and certainly inquire which police station had made this report, or, how many persons had died and when, or, what was the Indian treatment for heatstroke, and, had any dead body been brought for a doctor's

examination? In short, there are so many things to talk about if one really wants to but the Sahib just keeps quiet. I can't say whether this was because he had not paid attention, or because he did not understand what I said, or because he did not care about the deaths of a few blackies! Meanwhile, the Reader starts to unwrap the papers while this "cordial" meeting of ours is going on where both of us are keeping quiet. Having laid down the papers before the Sahib, the Reader stares at him. The Sahib asks me, "Anything else?" At these words I stand up and say, "No Sir, I had come only to pay my respects. It has been a long time since my last visit. I just wished to see you. I shall present myself some other time." This last thing which I said (as though I had said so many things that I should call this the last!), or rather the second thing, which was that I wished to see him, was a complete lie. Who the devil wishes to see him again? A meeting to be pleasant or unpleasant depends on how long it lasts. If it lasts for long it means that there have been frank talks. How the hell can a meeting be called pleasant when going, sitting, talking and taking leave—all this is over in two minutes? Who the devil wanted to meet him? As God is my witness, it was only to dash one's head to relieve one's conscience from a burden! I wouldn't have complained even if the Sahib had not talked to me at all but, you know, the Court Reader and the peons saw it all. They have seen me going away so soon after being called in. I feel disgraced before the persons who are junior to me in status and rank. As I come out, a whole crowd of peons and servants are already there in the verandah. On seeing me, all of them bow down to salute me. Oh God, why all this high respect for me now? For hours together I was kept waiting and waiting in the verandah but none of them was to be seen. From where have all these insects appeared? Aha! My only sin is that I have been able to pay my respects to the Sahib. These peons are appointed by the Government so that I may pay the penalty for it. However much I say to them, "You'll get it at my place at the time of getting the salary"; but shameless as they are, they do not give up following me. At last, I get angry and say, "I have nothing with me just now. I know you have a right and give you I must

but had I anything to give you just now, I would have given it. If you do not trust me, one of you may come along with me." They look at each other and as one of them prepares to take his seat on the coach box in my carriage, the head servant gives me a pencil and a piece of paper to write a note to the court official. But when I start to write something, these unmannerly people hold my hand saying, "First kindly let us know how much you are going to write." As this struggle continues I reach my carriage. The horse-keeper has kept the door open for me. With one foot on the foot-board, I quickly dash into it. The horse-keeper at once closes the door of the carriage and the horse starts. Taking a rupee from the coachman I wrap it up in a piece of paper and showing it to the orderlies I throw it on the ground. I see through the window that a peon picks up the wrapper. They must be annoyed to find only one rupee in it but by then I have gone far away beyond the reach of their foul words.

'I take a deep breath and feel as a labourer feels relieved after removing a heavy burden off his head. All the time on my way back I keep thinking about the meeting. Again and again I think and say to myself, "What is left of my honour in the eyes of the Reader and the peons? All of them will now talk about it to the whole city. A curse on earning a livelihood with such dishonour!" But then I console myself by saying, "Honour is a relative term. I should look at my equals and others like myself. They are also treated in more or less the same way." Why should I feel shy of my waistcloth when all others are naked, as they say. With these disturbing thoughts I reach my place. A few persons are waiting for me but they are not deputies as I am not a Collector that they should have to wait in the verandah before being called in. When they had come I was not there. They sit reclining against the pillows and cushions and make themselves comfortable. Ladies in the house send *paan* (betel leaves), and the servants prepare huqqas for them. As they see me, one of them says, "God is great, Deputy Sahib, perhaps you had a heart-to-heart talk with the Collector today. Do you know how long I have been waiting for you here?" Another says, "This humble being too had a mind to go and pay his respects to the

Collector. But when I learnt that you had gone I said to myself that no one would get a chance today." The third one says, "The news for a while has been that a new post of Sub-Collector has been created and sanctioned by the Board. Perhaps, the Collector was discussing this with you and that is why you got late." All these persons thus talk together while I change my dress and in my heart I am pleased to think and pray to God that they may continue to have such a misunderstanding.'

8 Noble Sahib Makes Ibn-ul-Vaqt a Reformer

Noble Sahib listened to all this with great attention. Now he was thoughtful, now he would smile and now he showed some aversion. But he did not interrupt Ibn-ul-Vaqt. When he had finished he said, 'I have always said that the greatest weakness of the English administration is that there is no rapport between the ruler and the ruled. Although this estrangement between the two has not been the sole cause of the Mutiny, it was certainly responsible for its escalation.

'As long as the people of India keep the English at a distance, there will be no satisfactory rule even for a moment. But both are to be blamed for this estrangement. The Englishmen in their arrogance do not care about the Indians and the Indians keep aloof and avoid them because of their ignorance. How can there be any unity of thought between the two who have neither a common language or religion nor the same customs or temperament? Both of them suffer. The obvious handicap for the Indians is that God has given Englishmen honour and wealth as they command the empire. And, now the Mutiny has clearly proved that they can well rule the empire, in the same way as they acquired it, by the sword. The more the Indians avoid them, the more they stand to deprive themselves of honour and wealth. Likewise, the English too cannot save themselves from suffering damages. What greater threat is there than the

weakening of the empire? Had the subjects been friendly today, first of all, the Tilangās would not have dared to revolt, and even if they had committed this foolish act, the revolt would not have spread like wild fire from one end to the other in no time. The Tilangās lit it and the subjects fanned it.'

'But, then, is there any way to get rid of this discord?' asked Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'Both the Indians and English should come closer to each other. I think no act of God is devoid of wisdom. Perhaps, this Mutiny took place so that both of them might realise their mistakes. The memory of the Mutiny is still fresh. A few years hence its horrible events will be relegated to the realm of tales and myths. The wound that has burst will be healed up one day, and as sure as you can see that tomorrow will follow today and the day after tomorrow, I can clearly visualise that day, and if God wills it, I shall see it with my own eyes. Perhaps, the scepticism of the Hindus will take a long time to go because they have only customs and rituals and no religion as such. But the Muslims are very proud of their religion. As far as I know, most of their religious precepts are very good. Their affinity with the English ought to allow them to mingle more freely.'

'No doubt, it should have been so but as I understand it, the Muslims here are much more rigid than the Hindus.'

'Are they rigid or is it that there has been no opportunity to develop an understanding because of mutual estrangement and that no attempt has been made in this regard?'

'Both these are responsible.'

'Well, take yourself. All my friends are anxious to meet you and some of them have actually asked to see you. I do not want you to be patronised when I introduce you to English society as though you had some motive or were a candidate for some post. At the moment the whole English community respects you as a well-wisher of the Government. I want to introduce you with the same respect, that is, you should meet them as their equal and friend. But please excuse me when I say that you may have to make a little change in yourself. If you have any objections

to it, it is better not to meet my compatriots although it will be difficult for me to give an explanation to them.'

'I should like to know in detail what sort of change you want?' asked Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'Well, at least a house in English taste. You know that we like to live in spacious houses outside the city and our lifestyle is also different. My friends wish to see you and they ask me if they may. Many a time I thought I would bring them to meet you but then I thought that I would unnecessarily put myself to shame since you were not in a position to meet them. Firstly, your house is situated in the streets where one can't take one's carriage. Then, the streets are so narrow, winding and unclean that no Englishman would like to go to such a filthy place. Your house is not so bad but there is no chair or table to make an Englishman feel comfortable. It was because of all these constraints that I dared not bring any of my friends to meet you. Now, you kindly let me know if you would like to meet them as I have suggested.'

'It is a difficult task,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt. 'Firstly, there is the prejudice of my Muslim brethren. Whether it is right or wrong, is another thing. But it is so strong that you can have no idea about it. I already find a change in the behaviour of even those persons who had heard about your stay in our house during the Mutiny. Though I have shared a meal with you today, I believe I have done nothing against the preachings of Islam because you belong to *ahl-e-kitāb* (people whose religion is based on a Revealed Book) and our Qur'an clearly allows eating with the People of the Book. But the wretched Muslims of this city are so ignorant and silly that if they hear about it (and why shouldn't they?), they will make my life miserable. And you know, I have a family and a circle of friends. I will not be surprised if they declare me an outcaste.'

'But do you know that prejudice unsupported by the writ of religion is only a silly confusion of the mind which cannot endure? Of course, at first people may scorn you for a few days and you will certainly feel hurt, but how long can they keep it up? If you adopt a particular lifestyle and steadily keep to it, its advantages will dawn on them, sooner or later. I have no doubts

that they will come to realise their mistake and instead of detesting your way of life they will themselves adopt it. Thus, what you dread is only temporary and is a short-lived inconvenience. You risked your life for the Government. Now, is it so irksome to bear a little imagined pain and trouble in the interest of your community? You should remember that Muslims were already the most depressed people in India. This Mutiny has ruined them. Only a few of them perhaps (not even a dozen in the whole of India) have been the Heads of States. I think, hardly any of them has survived the distress of the Mutiny. The Hindus were the ones who got annoyed over the use of cartridges greased with animal fat. Thus, it was they who started the revolt but, in the end, the Muslims were blamed for it. Now they alone are held responsible. These foolish people co-operated with the Hindus on account of their being compatriots but exposed themselves to such damage that there is no hope of their rehabilitation for years to come. Now, the only way to improve their welfare is to make good the loss they have done to themselves. They should as readily associate with the English as they avoided them in the past. And, I have no reason to think why anyone should not adopt ways which are useful to him?'

Noble Sahib continued: 'Muslims, however inglorious they may be, have still a sense of self-respect and honour. As far as I have observed, Muslims are well suited to governance. I have never found them stooping to mean flattery. They steadily brave adversity and misery. They are more intelligent and have a greater power of reasoning than others. They are certainly distinguished among their compatriots by their uprightness, truthfulness, honesty, sense of humour and modesty. I have had experience in dealing with many communities of India in the course of my Government service in different districts. Whether they are personal attendants, peons, administrative staff of the court, or as other officials, or as professionals and businessmen, or whatever, I have always found Muslims better than the others. I consider their religion (please excuse me if I say so) to be a martial one and to me every Muslim seems to be a soldier by his religion. One of my friends was a tehsīldār. I do not know

what he made of himself during the Mutiny but since he was quick-tempered and a strict administrator he must have involved himself in the revolt. One day, while talking about the Hindus and the Muslims he said, "Without seeing one I can tell a Hindu beggar by his voice. Whenever he begs for alms, he entreats in all humility and says in a subdued voice, 'May God bless you!' On the other hand, a Muslim beggar does not forget his vanity. In a threatening voice he says, 'O Ali!' and the whole locality at once gets alarmed."

'I think this is due to the fact that Muslims have been rulers for a long time. But if the Muslims have to face such conditions for a hundred years more, their coming generations will be so impaired that it may not be possible to reform them. This community already needed a reformer and now its very survival depends on the emergence of one. Why shouldn't you be *the* reformer? That is what I think. Personal honour is only an offshoot of national honour. However worthy a person may be on account of his wealth or skill or anything else, he should not expect to be honoured in full measure as long as he is a member of a disgraced community. There are hundreds of instances where members of disgraced communities amass huge wealth but they cannot remove the blemish of national disgrace from the face of their personal glory. Society does not honour them as much as they deserve in spite of their munificence. Long before the Mutiny I myself saw that about two hours before sunset there was a huge rush in a street of a big city as if there was a fair going on from one end to the other. Attendants of men of honour in carriages called out, "Aside, aside! Clear the way!" But who would listen to them? Meanwhile, a white man smoking his pipe happened to come by that way. The people at once dispersed, like the water-moss, before him. I realised then that this was due to the honour of belonging to the British Empire—national honour. National honour, together with personal honour is really great and wonderful. Otherwise without national honour, personal honour has no real worth and is only specious. There are many deeds of virtue in the world but no virtue is greater than the reform of a community. This is a virtue

which is beneficial to all and its gains may last from generation to generation. I think those whom you call prophets were really the reformers of their times.'

'I agree that Muslims need a reformer but I do not find myself equal to the task,' was Ibn-ul-Vaqt's reply. 'One may rise to the challenge to reform one person, but not the whole community. It is beyond the power of one man. To change the hearts of a whole community is the work of God.'

'It may be the work of God, nay, I am wrong, it is verily the work of God. But the works of God are always accomplished in the world only through the earthly agencies. Nobody knows the future. Who can say anything about it? Maybe, the plight of Muslims has reached its worst and now perhaps God wishes to better their lot. I should not be surprised if this is the only way for their betterment, or, it may not be the only way, but one of the ways. And maybe, that is why we are discussing it here. And maybe, God will put it in your heart and you will steadily begin this work and you will be successful.

'History bears testimony to the fact that great tasks in the world have often had humble beginnings just as the mighty trees grow out of tiny seeds. What is happening all around the world gives us hope that perhaps the age of progress has set in. Now the people are more intelligent, more enlightened, more liberal and more broad-minded than their forefathers. Thus, reform is not such a difficult task these days because people are already inclined towards it. It is just like their setting sail in a boat with a favourable wind or taking down a burden from above. In earlier times it was very difficult for a reformer to communicate his thoughts to others. He could share them only with those who were physically present before him. Today, printing, post and railways have made it so easy that if you propagate something, it will take only a month to make it widely known all over the world. Thus, with fame and a good name which are the rewards of a reformer, there will also be the pleasure of the English Government and the advantages that go with it, and good reward in the life hereafter, all part of the bargain if anyone wishes it! I see no better pursuit for you than to engage in this.'

'In our country it is quite a strange and difficult task. I myself should like to do as you propose but owing to a myriad reasons I find it hard to muster the courage.'

'Listen, please, the whole atmosphere in the country is conducive to reform and as I see, reformers will come up in the very near future. I wish you to get this reputation and good name. And, suppose you do not succeed in this endeavour, which will never be, and I guarantee it, what have you to lose? Is it not enough that you will be the first to stir the community?'

'The thought of being isolated disturbs me. The whole community as one will rise up against me. What can I, a single grain do against the raging fire of the multitude? Such an enormous task requires helpers and friends and I cannot find anyone among my friends who will be in accord.'

'I am not an Indian but perhaps no other Englishman meets as many Indians as me. As far as I know, all the English-educated Indians are of the same mind and there are many of them if you count their friends and acquaintances and relatives. Then, there are those who come into contact, for whatever reasons, with the English, and their number is on the increase day by day. In short, if such ideas are to be found among anyone, they will be among the Muslims; and that too among the Muslims of North-West,* Avadh** and Punjab. As people say, Avadh is full of the pleasure-loving while Punjab is a nursery of soldiers. By keeping them illiterate for so long, the Indian rulers caused them to become like clay not yet moulded into any shape, but which could be easily shaped. The ones who are difficult to change are the Muslims of the North-West Province. The peace and security brought by the English rule has only given them an opportunity to keep the memory of their sciences alive in their minds though they have grown quite obsolete today. You haven't had the opportunity to visit Europe. If you had ever gone there you would have realised that the greatness of the Europeans lies not in their ruling an empire. All their greatness consists in their

---

*Now Uttar Pradesh. **Now in Uttar Pradesh.

sciences and the modern inventions that are coming up every day—the sciences which have enabled them to invent railways and the wireless and steamers, and they continue to invent a thousand other useful machines. In every skill and craft they have surpassed the people of other countries whose wealth they have taken and continue to take. With their skills and standards of excellence, it was natural that they would control an empire. The empire is not equal in worth to these qualities and perfections, rather it is something got in the manner of a bargain over and above their skills, and is the prerogative of the English to have. The benefit, if any, which the English have from the empire is that a few of their countrymen find jobs here. I do not deny that the English get higher salaries than the Indians but why shouldn't they? See the long journey and the risk to life and limb they take owing to the difference in climate, and compare their clean, stately though expensive lifestyles with their sterling honesty and integrity and then you will be able to judge whether the high salaries of the Englishmen are proper or improper.

'It is an example of the daring spirit of the English that they have to pass so many tests to get these jobs and undertake this long journey leaving their country and near and dear ones because it is a matter of principle for them that everyone should earn his own living. Leave aside the common people, even a member of the royal family is no exception. The sons and grandsons of Her Majesty the Queen start their career as lowly functionaries. If Indians had to pass the same rigorous tests and were offered the same high salaries to live in a foreign country whose climate and conditions were opposite to their own, they would perhaps not even think of leaving their homes. Leave aside Europe, try and send someone from here to Burma. His whole family will start crying over it. This is their courage and then they are jealous of the high salaries of the Englishmen. However, even if all the Englishmen employed in India, including soldiers, become prosperous during their tenure here, what can their country gain from the riches of these few people where every year twice or thrice their number leave and settle down in

faraway islands because there is no place for them. It is difficult to accommodate the increasing population because progress in medicine and better hygienic conditions have led to a rise in the birth rate and life expectancy along with a fall in the death rate. You may have some idea of the comparative wealth of the Europeans from the fact that there, a person who earns two rupees a day commands only as much respect as a labourer here who earns one and a half or two annas. There, one who has an annual income of ten thousand rupees, which is the upper limit of a civil servant's pension here, can hardly maintain a carriage and personal attendants. Thus, even a person with little common sense can see that it is not because of the empire that Europe has become so rich. God willed the welfare and progress of the people of Europe. He inclined them to devote their minds to reflect on matters of fact and external phenomena and do research on them. This reflection and research led to the discovery of a thousand new principles. Understanding and acting according to those principles has given man limitless power. In short, the real sources of Europe's wealth and power are steam, electricity, etc., that is, basically their modern sciences. You may have heard of Hallway's name. He has a factory of ointments and pills. You can guess his income from the fact that he spends four lakh rupees a year on advertisements. Yet, his factories are not the largest. Go to Europe and you will know that the empire as compared with trade and business is just nothing. If I tell you about the riches and wealth of the businessmen there, you will take it to be an exaggeration. Then, our country is not very fertile and rich. It is poor when compared with India's mineral resources and fertile land. But as the people of India are ignorant of the new sciences, they do not know how to extract the benefits from their God-given wealth. For instance, how unfortunate for the Indians that cotton is exported from India, and the Europeans with their skill and intelligence manufacture different varieties of cloth from that and then sell them to the Indians at such a high profit to themselves! Thus, the survival of Indians, depends on the spread of modern sciences amongst them. They should be made to understand that

they have to devote their intellectual powers to scientific thought. By nature the people here are intelligent. If they make an effort and acquire a taste for the sciences, all their grievances and complaints will disappear. Since books on the modern sciences are mostly in English, the foremost necessity will be to spread the English language widely. Some people think that books on modern sciences should be translated into Urdu, but I do not agree with them. Firstly, Urdu has no words to translate all the technical terms of the modern sciences. Thus, it will be necessary to adopt most of these English terms in Urdu and there will be many mistakes in their pronunciation. I have seen several such books on medicine, chemistry, botany, etc. They do not have a single line free from English words. Such translations are half in English and half in Urdu. They are really in bad taste. And then, if you translate a word of one language into another however profoundly, it is difficult to present its exact sense in another language. Besides this, the spreading of modern sciences through English is only one objective. Another objective is to spread English thoughts. To spread social sciences alone is of no consequence unless there is freedom of thought, firm resolution, spirit of enterprise, great courage, generosity of heart and the sense of fellow-feeling, truthfulness in word and deed, that is, all those things that make a complete gentleman, and that one cannot become without one's learning English. One who knows English can easily acquaint himself with English thought through newspapers and books. The essence of reform so badly needed for the progress of India is that the Indians should be made Englishmen in their food, dress, language, habits, ways of living and thinking, in everything as far as possible. And, Time is quietly striving for it. But it is slow and the results thereof are long in coming. Modern exigencies have already created such thoughts among thinking men. May a reformer emerge soon and make a conflagration of this spark!'

'Your explanation has convinced me that this work must be done,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt. 'There is no doubt that it is most essential and useful. But please tell me how to initiate it?'

'A reformer should develop in himself the state of mind which

he wishes to develop in others and then he should persuade the people to follow his example,' was Noble Sahib's reply.

'Kindly excuse my submitting as to why you shouldn't be the reformer? You are a European and fully aware of the conditions there. And as far as India is concerned, you have travelled here widely out of your own interest. You have also come into close contact with the people of every sect and community in India. You have a sense of fellow-feeling to all, irrespective of religion and community. As such, who else can be a better reformer than you?'

'I am grateful for your opinion about me but my being a European goes against me to become a reformer. There will be hardly anyone amongst us, the civilian English community here, who may not have had such thoughts. The missionaries are also a part of us who have dedicated themselves to this task. But as their activities relate to religion, all their efforts are in vain. In the beginning they had enticed many Hindu boys, and some Muslims too, to embrace Christianity, and occasionally one hears of the baptism of a Hindu or a Muslim. But religion is a strange matter. It just gives a feeling of peace. Hindus were the main target of the missionaries. Then people became suspicious. They included in their religion a condition that if anyone who has abased himself by his taking an English education, one *samāj* (sect), or the other will bring him back to the fold. It has been a long time since the people of other religions embraced Christianity. Conversions are very rare now. The success of the missionaries' achieving their goals now depends on the occurrence of a famine for which they pray to God! When that occurs they take unclaimed children from the District Officer, raise and educate them so that they may grow up as Christians. And that is all. Thus, suppose any Englishman, not necessarily a missionary, wishes to become a reformer, how will you stop the religious misunderstanding among the Indians? People will just shun him. They won't listen to him even if they wish to. They won't accept him even if they are so inclined! A reformer should belong to the community itself so that he may find

support instead of repudiation. He should be taken as an example rather than as a target of reproof by his community.'

'Very well, God willing, I will undertake this task. "Come what may, in the waters I take my boat," as they say. But I hope you will stand by me.'

'Not only me but the whole English community and the Government, and all the reasonable members of your community who have the same thoughts but owing to lack of courage do not express them and are looking for support and for someone to come forward whom they can follow. All of them will stand by you. And listen, I am quite sure you'll soon be successful in this mission. People are already inclined towards it. Within a few days I shall see a large group in accord with your views as though they are your followers and you are their leader.'

Oh God, how long Noble Sahib and Ibn-ul-Vaqt have been conferring there. From eleven in the morning to four in the afternoon, and still their talks do not seem to end. The peons and attendants look through the glass doors again and again. In whispers the head attendant says to a peon, 'Well, you asked me why I got him seated in a separate room before the meeting. Now you understand the reason why. The Sahib holds him in the greatest respect.'

Meanwhile, Noble Sahib and Ibn-ul-Vaqt come out still talking to each other. Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'Please send for me if I am needed, otherwise I shall let you know a day before I come. Yes, one thing more. Please allow Jan Nisar Khan to stay overnight with me at my place after finishing his work here. He will be back here at his work early in the morning before the morning alarm gun is fired.'

How soon bad news spreads. Ibn-ul-Vaqt had taken his meal with Noble Sahib at eleven in the morning, and the people were already talking about it after the noon prayers in the mosque of the locality. One of them said, 'Well, what is this? They say that Ibn-ul-Vaqt, the gentlemen, has become a Christian!'

One of the audience said, 'No, that is not so! They say that the Englishman who was hidden in his house during the Mutiny

has been given an important assignment in the city. He has been frequently going to him and he ate with him today.'

A second member said, 'You are just amazing. Don't you know, one who takes his meals with an Englishman becomes a Christian? Not only he but seventy generations of his will become Christians! Or do you think that one grows horns after becoming a Christian?'

A third member said, 'It is not the first time that he has eaten with an Englishman. During the whole Mutiny the Englishman stayed with him at his house and always ate with him.'

The second member said, 'Just see, how cruel he is! He had sheltered an Englishman in his house—all right, leave that to his conscience. But he should not have taken his meals with us after that. Personally I think we'll have to repeat our fasts and prayers now. Let us ask the Imām Sahib (the leader of prayers), when he finishes his prayers.'

The first one said, 'Miseries have befallen the city, workers have lost their work, employees have lost their jobs and the residents have been uprooted, and still no one is sure of one's life. Investigations about the revolt are going on. The conditions are, as the proverb goes, "Fear God if you have done a wrong; even if you haven't, fear His wrath". If your life is a burden to you, there are very many other ways of losing it. Why should you unnecessarily drag the poor ones like us into your fire? You know, even the walls have ears. If someone carries a tale of it to Ibn-ul-Vaqt, all these great dialogues will disappear in no time. No, sir, I at least will not join these congregational prayers. Why the hell should one lose one's peace of mind and invite trouble?'

Meanwhile, as the Imām Sahib finished his prayers, that stickling defender of the faith put the problem before him. The Imam Sahib said, 'One does not become a Christian by taking meals with an Englishman. But one should always remember this warning: "One who makes his resemblance with a particular community, he becomes one of them." A Muslim should avoid it. But also remember that a rumour is only a rumour, after all. It may be true or false. You cannot rely on it. And, supposing it is true, the Qur'an says, "No bearer of burden can bear the

burden of another." (6:164) Why should one's deeds be passed on to his forebears or progeny?'

In short, those who had said their prayers dispersed but since so many people had come to know of it, there was a sort of commotion and outcry in the whole locality. When Ibn-ul-Vaqt returned, he found everyone raising accusing fingers towards him. Even those who were always the first to salute him pretended not to have seen him, and thus avoided him. When he stepped into the male apartment of his house, the ladies came to the ante-chamber to see him. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was needled to see them behave thus but none of them said a word to him nor did he think it proper to speak about it. He had not yet changed the court dress when his paternal aunt sent for him. When their eyes met, the good lady said, 'I shouldn't say a word, may God Himself punish the liars. People have been always jealous of our family but, God willing, they will burn and we will prosper. They have made such a deafening din and noise. God forbid, since afternoon they have been saying that the Englishmen have taken you in their fold, made you eat their food and that they wouldn't let you come home. How I have been telling everybody that my nephew is not that sort of person and that he is wise enough to teach even the Englishmen. I have been telling them that however much they may try, my nephew will make such good counter-arguments that they would be surprised. Thank God, the Forgiving and the Merciful, you have come back safe and sound. Look here, my son, if you feel that the Englishmen have other designs, as the people say, may this aunt of yours sacrifice herself for you; just shun them and give up all this wishing well. If the Fort has been ruined, let it be so, if God has so wished it. The one who has given us life, will give bread too for the grace of the sacred souls whose progeny we are!'

'What rubbish have they been telling you? I only went to see Noble Sahib. It was time for lunch. He invited me to have lunch with him.'

His aunt asked, 'But you didn't take it, eh?'

'Even if I did, what of it? Is he not the same Noble Sahib who stayed here with us for a full three months?'

'But that was a different matter.'

'My dear Aunt, you have read the Qur'an in translation. Just read the first section of the Chapter, *The Table*, which says: "The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them." Then, leave aside my sharing a meal with an Englishman. Do you find anything irreligious about me? I say my *namāz* (regular prayers), as usual. You may also remember that it was exactly in *Ramazān* (the month of fasting), that Noble Sahib came to our house. I observed the fasts the whole day and by the grace of God, I did not miss it once, and took my meals with him at night. I also did not miss my regular recitation of the Qur'an in the mornings. I do not know what else is required to be a Muslim. What is religion? It is a relation between man and God. Thus, no one should meddle with the religious affairs of others. And then, may God forgive me for these words, who can stop me being a Christian if I want to? I know I'll be materially well off. I'll come out of the category of the poor and be counted among the rich. I'll be no longer among the subjugated but counted among the rulers. I'll leave the foolish and join the wise. I'll cease to be among the disgraced and join those who are honoured. But of what worth is one's religion if it is guided by the greed or fear of the world!'

9 Ibn-ul-Vaqt Confers with Jan Nisar

With these words Ibn-ul-Vaqt took his leave and went back to the apartment kept for the males. Shortly after the evening prayers Jan Nisar arrived. Taking his seat he said, 'Today the Sahib did not even go for his evening walk. When you had left, he started to write letters and when he finished it was time to light the lamps. Then he asked me to come to you immediately. I cannot tell you how very pleased he is with you. He tells every

visitor about you. You are now the talk of the sahibs at the dining table too. But you live in the city and your house is situated in these winding lanes which are not even clean. If you lived in a bungalow outside the city like them, everyday the Englishmen would have visited you and stayed late into the night. Sir, though these people are called *kāfirs* (unbelievers), yet I do not find in us a fraction of the politeness, fear of God and morality that I have observed in them. They act like scarecrows as long as they keep us at a distance but once you meet them they become dearer to you than your own people. The memsahib in her letters from England kindly remembers even the groom. She enquires about the welfare of everyone's family by name. An army officer lives with his family in the blue-coloured bungalow in front of ours. Yesterday, no, the night before, at two o' clock, one of the *āyāhs* complained of chest pain. At once the Sahib himself brought the doctor and both the husband and wife stayed beside her till five in the morning. Now, tell me, please, is there any Indian officer who will treat his servants like this? They are so honest in their dealings that even if they terminate the services of a servant, in a fit of anger, they would never deduct a single pice from his salary. They are not like us who first plan to accuse the servant of theft and then terminate his services. Leave aside his salary, the servant will be really fortunate if he is allowed to leave with the clothes he is wearing and relieved with honour. If any of us were to serve an Englishman, even if it were for a few days, he would not be able to serve in any Indian home. You may put it to my loyalty but I would say that if there had been no constraints of religion, the Englishmen would be worthy enough to be worshipped. They treat their servants just like their children.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'But all the Englishmen may not be of the same temperament. Maybe, you happened to come into contact only with the good ones.'

'Yes, how can all be alike? There are men and men. Good and bad are everywhere but this much at least is true that most of the Englishmen are good while most of us are bad.'

'I think that those who are in the army are always rude and rough.'

'No, not at all. They are so gentle, generous and informal. Their informality is not quite like the friendship of a civilian, nor is it just the formal salutation of a soldier.

'As for the cross-breeds who have Indian blood also mixed in them, the more you condemn them, the better. They would just bite the Indians if they could. "Heaven grant the bald-headed should have no nails", as they say. I am not talking about the present conditions. The English have in reality suffered much at the hands of the Indians during the Mutiny. That is why they are so enraged. If it had been some other rulers, they would have certainly ruined the whole country. I repeat, that it is because of their high-mindedness that they do not want to ruin their subjects though their subjects have oppressed them so much. The Sahib was telling me that even this present seizure of property and the apprehending of people is only to be for a short while. As you know, Sir, we always have a crowd of sahibs at our place. They often talk about the Mutiny. I do not understand English well but I do know that now they are inclined to have mercy. This Mutiny was like a touchstone. Just as the faithful Indians were distinguished from the unfaithful ones during the Mutiny, the good Englishmen were distinguished from the bad ones. Among them, those who belong to the noble families advise the others to forgive and forget. One day, the Sahib said to me, "Formerly the Government in England had the sons of noble families educated at its own expense and prepared them for jobs in India. All the Englishmen who came to India in those days belonged to noble families. But for the last few years the Government has discontinued that practice and adopted a system of recruitment through tests and examinations. Those who pass the examinations get the job. There is no distinction now between the noble and the low and mean. Very often, the sons of the commoners, washermen, barbers, cobblers, bakers and persons of such other professions who have no respect in England, work hard and pass the examinations. No doubt, they are educated but as the proverb goes, "one who is basically mean

never misses a chance to do wrong." The subjects gain very little from them. But I would say again that even their bad ones are much better than most of our good ones. When you meet them you will be convinced.'

'Noble Sahib also says this,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt. 'But he wants to introduce me to the English officers as their equal.'

'Yes, why not? To meet as equals is essential, otherwise what is the point? You will only suffer indignities at the hands of the orderlies. After a whole day's labour you will just get to pay your respects and no words will be exchanged! Why should you have meetings like these? Come now, if you hire a bungalow there it will be really delightful.'

'Do you think that the English will welcome me in their society?'

'Of course, why not? They will, by all means! May God preserve you, you lack for nothing in appearance and dignity. God has given you wealth and riches. You can comfortably live like a man of status. You are not fluent in English but you understand it well. You can rectify this within three or four months of association with them. Further, the most important factor is the status of our Noble Sahib, may God bless him! He is highly respected in the whole Camp. Moreover, as I understand it, you'll be given a job within a day or two.'

'But, what will the Indians think about this?'

'The Indians will think that you have become a Christian, and, as I understand it, they already think so. Many of them asked me today itself about it.'

'What do you think about eating meals with Englishmen?'

'Noble Sahib once said that the Muslims of Turkey, Egypt, Persia and Arabia do not have such reservations and freely eat their meals with them. But those in our country consider it as an act of impurity.'

'Well, let us see what comes of it. I have given my word to Noble Sahib. But it may be difficult to get everything to English taste.'

'No, not at all, sir. You should not worry about that. There is a firm, General Suppliers Company, in Calcutta. Its agent is

here now. A bungalow of your choice will be shown to him so that he may get it furnished as per our instructions. Our Sahib did the same. Even the ceiling of his bungalow had been destroyed. Before going to Jhajjar, the Sahib asked the agent to commence work. He got the whole house renovated within a month and furnished it as it is now. Bungalow No. 42 across the road, in front of our house has been lying vacant. It is near the Sahib's bungalow and well situated. Its rent may be about forty or forty-five rupees a month. It will be arranged for you if you order for it. It belongs to a moneylender. He has recently renovated it because it had also been badly damaged during the Mutiny. The agent of the General Suppliers will get it furnished as you like. These people do not haggle. You just pay the amount when they send their bill. No botheration. Rather, I may speak about it to the Sahib. It will be a pleasure for him to arrange it, but he too will ask the agent to renovate it.'

'No, why trouble Noble Sahib for this? You may yourself look after the matter as you deem fit. Oh yes, what about the style of dressing?'

'Any dress gives a favourable impression if well matched. I, for one, do not like wearing half-boots with loose pyjamas and half the calves uncovered, or wearing trousers and a coat with a turban on the head, or any such ludicrous combinations. If you follow a particular style, do it in full measure, otherwise all of them will laugh at you and make a mockery of it. But then, you are the best judge.'

'All right, ask the agent for clothes also that will suffice for a year. And, since you are well aware of the customs of English society, take care that nothing should appear graceless in the eyes of the English.'

'Oh no, God willing, your bungalow will be so well furnished and decorated from top to bottom that the English ladies will come to visit it, and your tasty dishes will be the talk of the whole Camp. The main thing is money and good taste. Money, by the grace of God, you are not short of. And, as far as good taste and organising things are concerned, I most humbly say that all through these years I have learnt much when many a

time the Memsahib scolded me. The Sahib gave a dinner in honour of the Governor, and once he invited the Prince of Belgium to a feast—well, it is not good to blow one's own trumpet, but, you will see yourself and you may well inquire, that it is only yours humbly who is called to arrange the big dinners and parties in the whole Camp. Furnishing is a difficult task. Even the experts sometimes make mistakes. But memsahib has actually taken much pains to train me. I have learnt all this over the years. Don't worry, sir, I will look after all these things. But you should also learn English manners and etiquette because you will be the host and you will have to do many things yourself. For instance, receiving and seeing off the guests, entertaining them and enquiring after their health, etc. A little indiscretion makes all the labour in vain. One has to be very careful in meeting the ladies. I will send you a book on etiquette which Lady Noble gave me. Once you go through it, everything will be clear. Then, you will understand the ways of their society. Please observe how they behave with each other.'

Poor Noble Sahib was not to be blamed. In utmost good faith he had given advice to Ibn-ul-Vaqt which he considered useful for him and his community. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was not a child to be lured by him. Before taking any step he ought to have thought about his own capacity, the condition of his community, as well as his own condition, and the consequences thereof. Actually, from the very beginning he was inclined towards these ways. Noble Sahib's words just gave him the final shove so to say. He had already a sort of contempt for his community and its ways, and respect for the English and everything of theirs. But it was only a personal matter, neither beneficial nor useful to anyone else. What Noble Sahib did was only to explain to him how he could turn this to his own and his community's advantage.

There is yet some time before Ibn-ul-Vaqt changes his lifestyle. Jan Nisar has left but he remains immersed in thought. For a short while he feels as if he is sitting on a chair like the English sahibs in the garden of a bungalow just like Noble Sahib's and enjoying the moonlight. And then, he starts and

looks around to make sure that nobody has seen him in that state. He then casts aside his imagining and says to himself, as the proverb goes, "Now that I have put my head in the mortar, why fear the pestle?" Again and again he asks himself how his relatives and near and dear ones, friends and acquaintances, his neighbours, and people of the city and the whole community would treat him. And, this question does not let him concentrate on the idea of reform nor formulate his strategy. After having given his word to Noble Sahib he finds that it is not possible to withdraw. Now he condemns himself in his heart at his unnecessary haste. But then, again he thinks that with Noble Sahib behind him what better opportunity could he have. In short, Ibn-ul-Vaqt was constantly preoccupied with these thoughts and when he got tired he would wish that whatever was to come should come to pass as soon as possible. There was only one person with whom he could discuss this matter and from whom he could seek advice or counsel. That was Noble Sahib but he was out of station on some Government duty. Thus, Ibn-ul-Vaqt spent one month, or a month and ten days to be more exact, in constant worry. But thus, he also got the time to learn some English etiquette. Jan Nisar too taught him the necessary manners as though he was preparing him for the 'Entrance Examination of the University of the English Society'! In short, on the thirteenth of May, 1858, Jan Nisar came and said, 'Sir, by four o'clock today you will find everything in order. The agent got a bit late but he has furnished the bungalow splendidly. You will certainly like it. God willing, by nine tonight the Sahib will also arrive. If you wish you may come along and have a comfortable night there. It is an auspicious day and augurs well. May good fortunes attend you!'

'That's good. Let Noble Sahib come. See to it that it does not lack anything.'

'I've seen it and showed it to some others as well. It has everything. Only you have to enter it. God willing, you will find everything in perfect order.'

Early the next day, just after the sunrise, Noble Sahib sent for

him. He received him cordially as usual and taking out a letter from his court papers, he gave it to Ibn-ul-Vaqt and said, 'Congratulations! This is a letter granting you the post of Extra Assistant with a salary of two hundred and fifty rupees a month. It has been lying with me for the last four days. As I was to come here, I wished to hand it over personally and congratulate you. I have done one thing without your prior permission. I knew I would need your assistance in matters of investigations about the revolt. I had your services transferred to my department until the work is completed.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'You have put me under so many obligations that I find no words to express my thanks. The grant of land was all right, but how will I manage this Extra Assistantship?'

'You will, certainly you will,' said Noble Sahib. 'Others will wonder when they see how nicely you manage it. True, you are a bit unfamiliar with the rules and norms of the court but that is no problem. That is why I got you posted to my department. A well-informed secretary will be appointed when you hold the court. In a few days he will make you familiar with the rules and the norms. Besides the grant of land, this job had been proposed for you much earlier but they were reluctant to give this high post to you at once. So, permission was sought from the Governor. Fortunately, one full year has passed since the Mutiny. From tomorrow you start holding your court beside mine in the District Courts. I was very pleased to learn from Jan Nisar that you have taken bungalow No. 42 on rent as your residence and that it has been nicely furnished for you.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'Perhaps, you know that along with changing my residence I am also going to change my style of dress and the Indian ways.'

Noble Sahib exclaimed, 'Ah! Good for you! I will be only too glad to see you as the complete reformer and a gentleman reformer at that.'

It was then time for lunch. Noble Sahib wished Ibn-ul-Vaqt to have lunch with him but he said, 'Please excuse me just now. With your permission tonight I may have my dinner with you

in my new attire. Actually, I feel odd to sit or talk or eat with you in this state.'

Noble Sahib appreciated the idea and said, 'I'll call my friends for dinner today and introduce you to all of them so that they can also meet you.'

10 Felicitations

As soon as Ibn-ul-Vaqt had taken his leave from Noble Sahib, Jan Nisar took him straight to his bungalow. He had his hair cut in English style; he baptised him, so to speak, in that, he made him take a bath; he made him wear an English-style suit with braces and a stiff collar and tie as demanded by the season, hour and occasion and thus made him a European to all appearances. When Ibn-ul-Vaqt saw his reflection in the mirror he found he resembled an Englishman. He strutted about in the room and turned again and again before the mirror. After lunch he spent a few hours in taking a round of the bungalow. It was summer, the thermantidote* was on and puffs of wind blew in pleasantly through the fragrant khas screens hung all around. He reclined on a sofa and fell asleep. When he woke up, he went for an evening walk after he had changed his clothes. He was back at seven when, it was time to go for dinner to Noble Sahib's residence. He started to prepare himself for the occasion. The whole day no court or levee was held nor had there been any party, yet English etiquette demanded a change of dress for the third time since eleven in the morning. Noble Sahib's bungalow was just across the road. When he learnt that some other guests had already arrived, he also presented himself there. Before and during the meal, the English Sahibs repeatedly looked at him for he was a stranger to them but since he had not been introduced,

---

*A rotating fan fixed in a window-opening and incased in wet tatties, used in India to drive in a current of cooled air. (Introduced in 1831).

nobody spoke to him. He too did not talk to them. Noble Sahib was busy receiving the guests. Now and then he would come for a moment or so and have a word with him. The dinner was actually a long affair which lasted three to four hours with all sorts of stories and polite conversation. At long last when it was over and all of them had taken their seats, Noble Sahib stood up and said:

'Friends, it has always been a pleasure for me to meet you individually or together but this meeting tonight affords me greater pleasure for a specific reason. As you know from the invitation cards, this meeting has been arranged to introduce a new friend in our society.' This was followed by cheers.

'Time and again you have heard me relate the events that occurred to me during the Mutiny. As a matter of fact, they have been so interesting that I feel a fresh joy every time I repeat the story. With this consideration I hope no one will object to one more brief repetition here.'

'Oh no, not at all, not at all!' was the general response.

'Although I have never believed that I had suffered the most, I do think that my distress was no less than anyone else's. I was caught in the Mutiny suddenly in Delhi when owing to my illness I was staying there in a dak-bungalow, on my way to Bombay from where I was to proceed to England. The only man whom I knew or who was my friend or confidant or whatever you may call him, was my personal servant who is still with me. He was to accompany me to Bombay. I had been suffering from such a severe headache that I could hardly raise my head from my pillow. All of a sudden I heard the slogans of "*deen, deen*" and "*Ali, Ali*" in the street and within a minute a number of people dashed into the bungalow. It was later that I learnt that my servant was not there because he had gone to bring me medicine from the hospital. Four or five hefty men from among those plundering hoodlums dragged me to the rebel-guard's room at Kashmere Gate. I saw some English men, women and children sitting there as captives on the floor. They made me also sit there with them. But we were not allowed to talk to each other. I remember it full well because the unremitting headache

which had forced me to leave for England, had completely gone at that moment. After a while I saw my servant standing there looking at me amidst the spectators. He looked sad and miserable. He could not give me an open glance and even if he could, how could he help me? But whenever I raised my head, I found him around. I realised he sorely regretted my distress. It will take too long to relate the torture in the lock-up and I leave it because I have to say something more important. On the third day they encircled us and took us to the magazine ground and made us stand there till the detainees at the Fort arrived. Then making us sit on the ground they fired at us. Even at that time I saw my servant at the College Gate. Probably, my mind had become feeble because of the headache I had been suffering from for so long and perhaps, that is why I lost consciousness at the sound of the gunfire or perhaps owing to my wounds. Whatever I have said so far, occurred when I was conscious.'

Pointing towards Ibn-ul-Vaqt, Noble Sahib continued, 'When I regained consciousness and opened my eyes after midnight, I found myself in his house. It is he whom I wished you to meet here today.' More cheers.

'Not that I do not regard the excellent intentions of my servant as being of a high order—but he was obliged to do so since he was my servant. On the other hand, this gentleman and the members of his respected family, had never had any contact with any Englishman. For a few years he studied the oriental sciences at the Delhi College. After leaving the College he joined the ranks of the genial retainers at the Royal Court in his hereditary capacity. As such, there could be no other reason to give me shelter in his house except for human feeling and good-heartedness. To give me shelter and keep me hidden in his house was really a very risky affair, particularly because he happened to be in the royal service. Look at my complexion and features. Suppose I wish to pass off as an Indian and assume a disguise, my colour and hair and eyes would betray me at once. Apart from this, his house is very near the Khānqāh, which had come to be a meeting place for the mujāhidīn, in those days. From the very beginning to the end he treated me well. And, this is

also proof that he had no other design in giving me shelter. I am not saying all this to express my sense of gratitude to him. What I want is to remove from your hearts and minds, gentlemen, the wrong impression, or misunderstanding that Islam is the greatest enemy of the English Government. The founder of the religion of Islam has specifically expressed his agreeableness and happiness with the Christians in the Qur'an. Commensality and matrimonial relations with us have been declared lawful for the followers of Islam. In Constantinople and other Islamic countries I have myself observed that unrestrainedly they eat their meals with the English people, and their dress is just like ours except, of course, the *fez* (headwear) which is the distinguishing part of their national dress and by which they are identified. Commensality and matrimonial relations are the two great means of developing a sense of unity, and this permission proves that the Prophet of Islam approved of friendly relations of members of his fold with us. Muslims of all the countries other than those of India verily follow it. Associating with the Hindus has done much harm to Muslims in India. They have grown sceptical and superstitious like them. Similarly, the hatred that the Muslims have for the English is not at all religious. It is a practice which they have taken from the Hindus. All those Muslims who know their religion well, do not at all share this hatred. I know that the celebrated Muslim divines in Delhi refused to issue a fatwā of jihād, or a decree of holy war, however hard the rebels pressed them. Among those who refused was this friend of mine too. It cannot be denied that there were many Muslims among the rebels. But what kind of Muslims? Mostly the common run of people, the low and the unworthy, the wily ones who have nothing but custom and ceremony as their religion. And, if any Muslim of rank or dignity has rebelled, he has made religion only a cover for the real cause of his rebellion which has been his anger, greed or some such thing. Just as our nation has been known for its chivalry, in the same way, our true religion is known for its spirit of tolerance and forgiveness. The Divine Will of God wanted to test both these qualities in us. By the grace of God, we have passed the

test of chivalry. Now we should try to prove ourselves worthy of the second quality, too. We were chivalrous when we were being overpowered. But now that God has granted us victory, we should be tolerant and forgiving. The Asian nations will think of us as powerful, not weak, if we forgive whom we have overpowered. If our chivalry has served as the mortar in building the empire, tolerance will prove to be the cementing force.' (At this, he pointed at Ibn-ul-Vaqt).

'He has also told me that he intends to work for unity between the Indians or at least between his fellow Muslims and the English. If he does so, and I am confident he will, then the Government should appreciate these efforts more than his giving me shelter in his house. The Government has granted him land which yields two hundred and fifty rupees a month and the post of Extra Assistant which is a high post for an Indian, as reward for his actions. I knew all about him since I have lived with him during the whole Mutiny. He is a good scholar of oriental sciences and has studied geography, history, political economy, mathematics, etc., at the Delhi College. His general knowledge is of a high order and to be much admired. He is very fond of reading newspapers. He is broad-minded and has lofty thoughts. In short, once you get to know him, I hope you will always be pleased to meet him. Well, I will trouble you if I detain you any longer. This is all that I have to say at the moment. I thank you once again for kindly consenting to come. With that I take my leave.'

11 Ibn-ul-Vaqt's Speech

As soon as Noble Sahib took his seat, Ibn-ul-Vaqt stood up. No one, not even Noble Sahib, expected that he would also speak. He said:

'Gentlemen, this is the first time that I have attended such a respectable gathering. I am not accustomed to, nor am I

competent enough to speak before gentleman like you. But Noble Sahib has so kindly introduced me to you that I take it as my appointed duty to express my sense of gratitude to him. As far as I know, I have not done anything for which Noble Sahib or the Government should be so grateful. I picked up Noble Sahib from the heap of dead bodies and kept him in my house. But if I hadn't done that I would not have been a Muslim, nay, not even a human being. I performed my religious, rather human duty, and I do not think I deserve any praise for it. It is Noble Sahib's gentleness and the generosity of the Government that they look upon this as a favour for which the Government in compensation has granted me a highly profitable estate and a high-salaried job. We have not yet come out of the shadows of the Mutiny but it has been rooted out and its ramifications will themselves wither away and turn to dust even if no conscious efforts are made. It is the way of the world that efforts are made to find out the causes of an event only after it has taken place. But blessed are those who find out the causes well before the results manifestly show themselves. "Blessed is the man who foresees the end result", as they rightly say. Well, if we have lost that opportunity, it will be of crucial interest at present and useful in future if we ponder over the causes of the Mutiny. The press has started discussions on it and every one says whatever he thinks. But if the Government, which actually needs to be most informed, acts upon what the press says, and this is what the press wishes it to do, then, with my apologies to the Government and to you, let me say the Government will be misleading itself. With all my good wishes for the Government, I am obliged to say that it will remain the same ignorant and uninformed Government as it was before the Mutiny. In governance, the interests of the subjects and of the Government are inter-related. While the Indians have received manifold advantages from the peace and freedom of the English rule, which as a matter of fact were absent earlier, it also cannot be denied that England too has become all the more rich for it. It is due to her rule over India that she has taken an edge over all other European countries. Some foolish Indians may think

that the Englishmen greatly benefit from the high salaries they draw here. They do not know that this is not even a fraction of the benefits to be had in England. England is the home of skill and industry and the source of her wealth, I may say the only source, is trade. The rule over India has increased the trade of England a thousand times over and it is anybody's guess how much more it will increase. So, if we compare the interests of the two, the balance will tilt in England's favour. That is why the English should ponder more over the causes of the Mutiny. I think the English Government is fortunate that no other power has come to stake a claim over India and that no one from one end of the country to the other has the ability to govern, and that the different communities of India have not yet developed the sense of oneness among them. The English conquered this country by the sword; by the sword they kept it under them, and by the sword they suppressed the Mutiny. But the power of the sword can conquer the bodies of the subjects but not their souls. For hundreds, rather for thousands of years the country has had despotic rulers. The Indian subjects do not yet understand the essence of the English rule. They regard the District Officers as reincarnations of kings. Thus, besides their official duties, one more important duty of the English officers is that they should consider themselves officiating for the Queen and treat the people in a manner that is worthy of a Queen's representative. Now, everyone of you here may please judge for himself how far officers have performed this duty. The English, with rare exceptions, are so rudely behaved with Indians and hold them in such contempt that no one wishes to meet them unless of course, one has to. To develop mutual feelings of love and cordiality between the English and the Indians is as difficult a task as to keep a lion and a goat together. I do not wish to say anything in defence of the Indians. And, I also agree that no English gentleman is happy to meet an Indian. But if one has to deal with people who are ill-favourably regarded, one should be able to control oneself to some extent. "What can be done when the people are such!" If no one wants to take this much trouble, no good can be expected from the Indians.

'After the Mutiny, the English complained that the Indians had not supported them. But they should also look within themselves and ask what obligations were performed or kindly treatment given to expect any support. They won't be able to establish a single reason. In the light of this just and fair principle, the long list of persons implicated in revolt cases will then be much reduced. As far as the revolt is concerned, I have already submitted before you that Indians do not understand the kind of Government which is really there.

'Ungratefulness is the nature of man. To me the Mutiny, about which so much has been said, was no more than an expression of human nature. It is true, that the Indians have benefited from the English rule but they have many real or notional, proper or improper, complaints and grievances against it as well. Thus, if they forgot the benefits too while giving vent to their grievances, what else can it be ascribed to but to the weakness of man or shortcomings of human nature? The English and the Asian governments are completely different from each other. They have nothing in common between them. For hundreds, rather for thousands of years, Indians have been accustomed to the rule of their compatriots. They had easy access to them. The revenue of the country belonged entirely to the King and he spent it without any restraint in whichever way he liked. But all the wealth of this unfortunate country was always spoilt in frivolous pomp and show and debauchery. Only sycophants and self-seekers gained. The river of wealth flowed only in one direction and helped only those who were so destined. A change of rule from the Indians to the English is no more different than a change of the course of that mighty river of wealth which has started flowing in the opposite direction. What I mean is that the kind of rule established now is such which this country has neither seen nor heard before—that is, "the people belong to God, the country to Queen Victoria, and the order is that of the Company". This means that those who are to be governed are one while the rulers are three, and all three are hidden from the eyes of the ruled. Gentlemen, you will be amazed at the confusion of the people here but there is no

exaggeration in what I say. English rule is a puzzle to the Indian subjects and the common people have not been able to solve it as yet. As it is, a change of rule is not an easy matter. And then, think of a change like this, where the ruler and the ruled have nothing in common. Neither do they belong to the same country, nor do they have the same language, nor the same religion. Thus, for Indians it is not just a change of rule but a change of world. All the former contacts and links have been broken and are of no use, their former talents do not help, and all their prudence is of no avail. Thus, the genial retainers, their dependants and the dependants of their dependants, who will indeed make a very large group, were rendered helpless. They were left with no links and contacts and put out of employment. Now every fair-minded person may himself judge whether the displeasure of this group with the English Government was legitimate or not.

'Then, the English administration carried on for so long that most of the people who had seen the times of kings had passed away. What ought to have been done was to have forgotten the old practices and norms as one does the dead. But instead we found their relics still there to remind us of them. Many large and small, subjugated or sovereign, Indian states existed in many parts to serve as the true examples of the Asian Governments. If the English Government wants to keep its subjects happy, there should be one administration for the whole of India. I have never been outside this city nor have I had an opportunity to live or serve in any native Indian state but from what the people say and what I gather from the newspapers, I have an idea of their general condition. Delhi's Fort was itself like a small state. I have been a genial retainer myself. My family has lived for generations in this city. Nothing in the city and the Fort is hidden from me. I can say that life in the city was very different from life in the Fort and that the latter was an altogether different world. I take it as a good omen for the country that such a great revolution had taken place in the form of the Mutiny. It was only then that her Majesty the Queen had assumed the reins of power and that

the Company ceased to have any control. I am sure there will be a great many changes in administration.

'Now, if someone asked me for my opinion, I would first of all recommend strongly that the Government should straighten out its relations with these native states. Except for a few of them, these states whose area, population or revenue taken together is as large as that of the British Empire, are damaging themselves to such an extent that their chaotic conditions are endangering not only themselves but also the English system of administration, English subjects and everyone else. And, unless these states are thoroughly reformed, the English Government should not rest content with its administration. The great disorder in each and every one of these states is likely to be a blow to the English Government. When I say "great disorder", it does not mean that the head of a princely state considers himself a contender for power against the English Government by merely disobeying its orders. I frankly state that the head of a native state, whether he be a Hindu or a Muslim, may be ease-loving, lazy, foolish, ignorant, debauched, neglectful and extravagant, spending more than his income; in short, he may indulge in everything, but cannot think of revolt. The English Government has shown its military strength in India, particularly after the Mutiny, just as the fire shows its property to burn. Thus, to think that the Indian princes are rebels is quite absurd and baseless. But the alarming fact about the Indian states which I wish to bring before the English Government is that most of the Indian princes owing to their exceeding incompetence and misdeeds are indulging in such wickedness that firstly the English Government will always remain afraid of the uncouth and uncultured subjects of these states and secondly, they will find that English subjects too are becoming spoiled by their example. In the body of the empire, these states are like leprosy marks. How can one be sure that these marks will not prove to be infectious to the other healthy parts of the body? If my words give the impression that I am in favour of annexing these states, it will mean that I am the greatest enemy of my nation and country. But what I do think is that leaving these states to

themselves in such disorderly conditions will be as cruel as their annexation. When the English Government regards itself as the patron, protector and custodian of these states, which in fact it is, it is also under an obligation to reform them. But the English Government has not taken steps to meet this obligation as it ought to have done. Of course, an official designated as Agent or Resident is appointed in every state. But he has no say in the internal administration of the state. He only sees to it that the respect and authority for the English Government is well established and that there is no general disorder. If a father does to his children what the English Government has done to these Indian states, then we cannot commend such a father. Some good has been done but more needs to be done. The English Government on the whole will not be thought of as a good Government in the eyes of the civilised world until all its states are as well governed as its own territory. It will never be free from the fear of its external enemies and it should never be either, but surprisingly I do not find that it is worried about these Indian states especially if these states continue to remain maladministered, as these internal enemies will prove to be more dangerous than the external ones.

'Gentlemen, I wish now to draw your attention to another thing. There may be many reasons for hatred and enmity between the nations of the world but the strongest one is the difference of religion, particularly among the Indians. Hindus are so bigoted that they do not ever want to associate with the people of other religions. How can you expect any friendship and unity with people who do not drink even water touched by a member of another community? If there are any people in India who can mix with the English, they are the Muslims because true Islam is free from all such prejudices. Not only that, the Holy Revealed Book, that is, the Qur'an, is silent about such prejudices but it clearly allows commensality and matrimonial relations with Christians. I do not think that there is a better way to develop a friendship between the two communities other than through commensality and matrimonial relations. But in India there is ample proof to show the extent to which religion

has been influenced by custom and ceremony. Hindus and Muslims have been living together for a long time and we can see that both the communities have taken much from each other. It is a great pleasure to find that this coexistence has reduced greatly the hatred that might have arisen owing to the difference in religions, particularly because of the rigidity of the Hindu religion. As a result of the Muslim influence, Hindus have given up the *dhotī* (long cloth) and wooden sandals, and taken to trousers and shoes, and now keep their womenfolk in seclusion. They have also taken to the study of the sciences of the Muslims. Thousands of Hindus observe *Muharram* by taking out *ta'ziya** processions, and they hold the tombs of Muslim saints in veneration and make vows there, like the Muslims, which is a sort of worship. Likewise, the Muslims, under the influence of the Hindus, avoid commensality. They have given up the practice of widow remarriage, and most of them believe in astrology. Many marriage customs observed by them, which are unwarranted and not to be found in their religion, have been taken from the Hindus. However, the intermingling of the Hindus and the Muslims has at least resulted in the fact that they are not afraid of each other. This state has developed only after hundreds of years of coexistence but I do not perceive it as unity. Each has a sore heart against the other at present. If someone were to feed this fire, Hindus will be the same kāfirs, and *mushriks* (believers in the plurality of Gods) in the eyes of the Muslims; and the Muslims will be the same bloodthirsty and impure ones in the eyes of the Hindus. This disunity is a good omen and augurs well for the English Government as long as it is only between the subjects.

'Now, let us see how far the Government has not allowed religious displeasure to grow against itself? What the people say is that all this tumult was because of the use of cartridges greased with animal fat. But I consider this to be a very feeble reason.

---

*Ta'ziya. A representation of the shrines of Hasan and Husain, sons of 'Ali, which is carried in procession in Muharram, the first and mourning month of the lunar calendar.

The common people may have been given to misunderstanding because for them every Englishman represents the Government, whether he be an American missionary or a merchant or a tourist or even a hunter. But those who know a little bit about the nature of the English Government are fully aware that it is not in the least concerned with any religion, and that from the very beginning it has kept itself so aloof from religious affairs that it is libellious and a false imputation to accuse it of partisanship in religious matters. But ignorance or consciously ignoring the thoughts of the subjects may lead the Government officials to commit mistakes which may create religious resentment. I think that (with the introduction of the Enfield rifle)* the use of cartridges greased with animal fat was one such mistake (because the Indian soldiers believed that the grease was made from cow or pig fat, obnoxious to both the Hindus and the Muslims)*. But I do not hold that the cartridge issue alone was the cause of the Mutiny. What I think is that the matter had been simmering in the hearts of the people for a long time. The business of the cartridges only stirred it up. The real cause of the Mutiny was the discontent of the subjects and there are many reasons for it. Of course, the cartridge issue is also one of them.

'Now, let us find out whether it was only this issue that made the people suspicious of the Government's intended intervention in religion or was there any other previous step of the Government's that may have led to their discontent? If the English Government had really kept itself aloof from interfering in religious matters in the sense that it has not deterred the Hindus and the Muslims from their performing religious duties or that it had not lured anyone to Christianity, then it would have been all right. But religion, particularly the religion of the Hindus, is a difficult issue. Their religion is weaker than a cobweb and more delicate than the "touch-me-not" plant. Apart from that, it is based on the feelings of the heart, which nobody

---

*Words in parenthesis are provided by the translator.

can reach, and worse still, a Hindu may become an outcaste if he is touched or if he even unconsciously takes food or water touched by anyone of another religion. And, owing to this weakness, some Muslim kings got an opportunity to convert thousands of Hindus. In short, Hindus were already afraid of the treatment by the Muslims. However, with the advent of the English, they realised that the English outdid even the Muslims —that is, they did not abstain from what even the Muslims abstained from. As the proverb goes, "the old man's well enough, but Lord! The young one out-Herod's Herod". They are so zealous in propagating their religion that their missionaries go on giving sermons and distributing free religious books from street to street. They have no reservations about their taking anyone into their fold, be it a sweeper or a scavenger. Thus, doubts and suspicions against the English Government took root in the hearts of the Hindus. Now, suspicion is like a tree which grows as water-moss finding little protection. If it is burnt, it flourishes like *kāns* (a tall species of grass that grows luxuriantly on waste and sandy soils) and if it is cut, it grows all the more. However good you are, or however much kindness you may show to a suspicious man, he will always think ill of it. Thus, instead of their creating a sense of gratitude and obligation, the Government has contributed to the growth of suspicion. People say to themselves, "Are the English fools, or devoid of common sense that they should bring bad repute to themselves or destroy their good name by openly enforcing Christianity? They are like a treacherous silken blade. They thought to pat the head but eat the brains, as the proverb goes. Just see their plan to convert the people to Christianity! They must have thought "Why give poison when the sweet kills!" ' Adding to their doubts and suspicions they also saw that the English-educated people had become shaky in their faith and had turned their backs on religion. Thus, the suspicion became their conviction.

'Gentlemen, some of the things that I have just now mentioned may individually seem to be insignificant to you, but when taken together, you will agree that on the whole there were

enough reasons for mutiny and revolt. Englishmen have also been showing little respect for the places of worship of the Indians. The Jama Masjid of Delhi is a renowned historical building. Which unfeeling Englishman is there who would not want to visit it if he happens to come to this city for whatever reason? Well, it hardly matters whether he visits it or not. But when Muslims consider it an insult to their religion to enter a mosque with one's shoes on, is it not important that the Englishmen view it from the gate through a telescope, or simply remove their shoes before entering even if this be out of step with English convention? Well, this is about Muslims. Hindus are displeased to allow visitors of even other religions inside their places of worship. True, to wish to visit beautiful and renowned places is natural but why should it be necessary to injure the feelings of others? Once I happened to discuss this with a Muslim. How aptly did he say, "Well, today it is only a matter of seeing the inside of a historical building. But suppose tomorrow they wish to see how our womenfolk live inside the house. Will they then forcibly enter our house?"

'The thing is from your perspective you have to deal with silly people. If one wishes to please them, there are a thousand ways of doing so. But if you give no importance to them and do not care for their pleasure and pain, as is the case, why lament the Mutiny? To think of Indians as of no worth and be indifferent to their happiness or unhappiness is the attitude of the English officials, and it is reflected in all the Government actions as well. No doubt, the Government has good intentions and wishes to make its subjects comfortable and prosperous in every way but the problem is that it sees with the eyes and hears with the ears of its officials who have no contact with the subjects. Thus, the suffering, needs and requirements, that is, the state or condition of the subjects is not known to the Government. I agree there is no person in the whole of India who may have all the information and ability and honesty whom the Government may trust to be a spokesman of the subjects and from whom they can seek his advice. Persons known for their dignity, high position and riches, for instance Indian princes, are just lumps

of clay worth nothing. They may not even know that two and two make four. Their existence or non-existence hardly matters. If they had the ability to advise the Government, wouldn't they have managed their own affairs? A few, only a few of them are said to be intelligent but they may easily make an excuse that they have no time for it. As a matter of fact, gentlemen, why should they be interested in helping the English Government? And, if ever they have any interest, one must be highly capable to argue with the old, experienced and crafty members of the Council. Thus, according to a proverb, "the child does not go to school, he has to be taken there,"—if the Government compels any of the princes to attend the Council meetings, what will he do there except foolishly watch others and feel belittled in their eyes? He will just watch members of the Council discussing between themselves matters which he may hardly understand. All the time he will try to guess which side the Governor-General favours. At last, when as a formality he is asked to give his opinion, he will just say "yes, yes" to what the Governor-General says and will feel relieved.

'And now, something about those who have been educated in Government Colleges. There is no doubt that they are the only Indians who have the ability to advise the Government. They know English and also the state of affairs of the country. They are enlightened and broad-minded. They also make tall claims about freedom and patriotism. The most important thing is that they fully understand the nature and aims and objectives of the English Government. But they too have some shortcomings. Firstly, as the proverb goes, "big words from a little mouth", they talk of equality with Englishmen. And that is why they are an eyesore to the English. Secondly, as they do not belong to English society, they have no consideration for the privileges of the English people. Thus, they cannot be expected to give fair and just advice. But in spite of all this, what I want to say is: shall we give up the path which we follow just because there are some hurdles in it? Had the Government given it a thought from the very beginning, these very Indian princes, whom I call the scars of disgrace on India, would have been capable of taking

their seats in the British Parliament, not to mention the Council here. But the Government made a serious mistake in the case of the Indian states and it left them completely free and unbridled like a camel unstrung, to spoil themselves as much as they could. It seems, the English Government regards the chaotic conditions in these states as a step to strengthen itself. Now, suppose we give these princes an opportunity to serve on the Council, their conduct will be just the same as I have stated a little while ago. But if we patiently wait for some time, these princes will be ashamed of themselves one day. Personally I feel, more than any college or school, this Council alone is enough to educate these princes. All of them should be made the members of the Council turn by turn. A system of rotation may be worked out to make it compulsory for them to present themselves at the Council every five years. You will see that by the second attendance, they would have improved themselves considerably.

'In short, the type of government which runs the country on the will of the people does not exist in India. India has still a despotic government which has been its destined fate. The only difference is that formerly it was governed by its own countrymen and now the foreigners have replaced them. For ages together India has been known for its proverbial rivers of silver and gold, and there is no doubt that no other country in the world is as fertile and rich in natural resources as India, but how true about India is this couplet of an Asian poet:

> What gains can a perfect guide hold out
> For those who are destined to remain deprived;
> See, even *Khizr* the Guide took along
> Alexander athirst by the Fountain of Life!

'Gentlemen, if you bear with me a little more, before I take my seat I will convince you that as compared with earlier times the Indian people are very poor today and they are growing poorer day by day. They have four categories of occupations: the agriculturists, the craftsmen, the salaried ones, and the businessmen. The first category includes people from *ta'alluqa-dār* or big landlords to the ploughmen including farmers,

cultivators, etc., that is, those who are related to the land. Before the English administration no one exactly measured or distinguished between the different kinds of land. Land tax for a year was generally assessed on the basis of the tax realised the previous year or if they were diligent enough, they just made estimates for each village. That was all. It may be proved by hundreds of documents that there were many excesses under the Indian Governments but in the matter of Government revenues, the Government was in fact the wronged party. Landlords in connivance with Government officials always got the taxes fixed up for less than what was due. Then, it was seldom that some honest landlord would pay the tax in time. Dues pending for two to four years were one thing but when it came to be a large amount, they settled it at one-third or half of it. As for the cultivators, it was as if they were not counted as subjects of the Government. Their fortune and misfortune, loss and gain, were all in the hands of the zamīndār. But since he had his self-interest, he took the cultivators to be a part of his personal wealth. He helped them by giving seeds, *taqāvī* (loans for implements, etc.) when necessary. He would also lend them money for the purchase of cattle and for marriages in their families. Then, as a custom there were no cash payments. Whatever the yield at the time of harvest was shared between the landholder and the cultivator. This was, in short, the condition of land revenue of the Indian Governments.

'Now, let us see the administration of the English Government. First, it got every inch of land measured whether cultivated, uncultivated or fallow. Then the condition of every field and its yielding capacity was determined in the light of its soil, fertilisation and irrigation facilities on the basis of village records, personal evidence and experience of the people. After thus sagaciously finding out the net produce of the village, the Government's share was fixed, apparently at half but in fact at a full two-third of it. But with all this research and investigation, this assessment was not a permanent one but at the most for thirty years so that if the zamīndārs prospered, they would be

squeezed again by the Government. I do not mean that the Government should not take its due share. If it has taken steps to determine its tax demand after getting the land thoroughly checked, it is in fact acceptable. But what I wish to say is that the relation between the subjects and the Government is, in a way, like the relation between man and God. What is required here is not mere justice but compassion and kindness. Like a usurer, the Government should not have been so strict to the last pice in settling the accounts particularly with such subjects which owing to the corrupt officials of the previous Governments or owing to their own arrogance or shrewdness had been accustomed to pay the Government taxes only like the payment of the toll tax. Then, the terminable nature of the settlement of revenue is the cause of great discontent to the zamīndār. And to tell the truth, it is an obstacle in the country's progress. Why should the subjects, however good-intentioned and submissive, put in hard work and labour and invest hard-earned money so that the land becomes arable and productive, when the Government will come to claim half of the produce? Every village was a small state in itself under the earlier governments. But now the revenue system of the English Government has made the land-holders so helpless and resourceless that in most of the cases land-holding has become a curse. The Government has given so many rights to the cultivators that the land-holder has no control over them. A land-holder has no power now to evict a cultivator. He has no power to hold the produce of the field. He dare not realise the rent by using force or pressure. The Government realises its dues from the land-holder on time. But for whatever the land-holder has to realise from the cultivator, he is advised to file a suit and get a decree from the court. In short, the revenue system of the Government has led to great unpleasantness and enmity between the land-holders and cultivators instead of its creating a sense of fellow-feeling and mutual co-operation among them. The old village corporate groups have disintegrated. Every one is his own master now. There are as many land-holders as there are fields. In Arabic they say, "union is strength." I do not know but I

believe there must be some such proverb in English too. Thus, if the old land-holding system were there in every village, each group would have been a source of strength in its own way and together they would have been a great force not easy to reckon with. If this force were to work for the Government, I do not think the Government would require any money, army, arms, ammunition or any other power. But the Government, instead of utilising this natural God-given force thought it easier to let it go waste and be destroyed. The wisdom of the Government in this regard deserves no more admiration than the wisdom of a *jogī* (an ascetic) who lets his hand wither lest he should do any sinful act with it. The land-holders went into decline because the Government deliberately uprooted them. As for the cultivators, they had the age-old habit of doing what the land-holders asked them to do. Now the position is that the land-holders are ruined. They haven't the resources to maintain themselves. But the cultivators are also ruined and so badly although the Government in its wisdom had tried to help them get out of a pit, but instead they staggered and fell into a well! The land-holders oppressed them and coerced them but they never wished them to be completely ruined. Now, these cultivators have to face the bankers, moneylenders and usurers whose philosophy is to crush and press them as much as they can like oil-seeds and then make more money by selling the oil-cakes to a chaff-seller for the cattle. So, what is the condition of the cultivators now? Out of a thousand hardly one or two may have been spared, otherwise all of them have become the bonded labourers of the moneylenders. They haven't even the seeds left with them to be sown on time. All kinds of superior grain may be produced in the fields but once the cultivators come into the hands of a moneylender, they and their children can have nothing but the small grain-bearing grass of little value as their lot, just as only Manna and Quail were importuned for the Israelites. In short, all those related to agriculture, be it the land-holders or cultivators, are distressed and ruined. As the Government revenues are collected well in time, it thinks that its revenue settlement system is working well and that the land-

holders and the cultivators are well off. How can the Government know the true condition of the subjects? Who can take their complaints and grievances or speak for them to the Government except of course, a European District Officer? For, among the Indian officers no one commands so much respect nor has anyone the courage to do it. And as for the District Officer, in his heart of hearts why should he think of waking the sleeping hornets? If he is himself the assessor, he will first have to admit that his assessment has been wrong, and generally it is useless to expect such things from anyone. And, if he is not the assessor, he will certainly be a Joint Collector. In his enthusiasm to show his efficiency he cannot postpone or stay the collection of the dues. And then to propose a reduction in revenue is to invite explanations for nothing. The Government finds out so many defects and faults (and it is its privilege, after all) that it is very difficult to satisfy it. This is, in short, what our revenue system is which affects at least two-thirds of the subjects.

'The condition of the artisans and craftsmen is still worse. True that the Government is less concerned with them, rather it does not concern itself with them at all. But the machines of Europe have completely ruined them. Before our very eyes how many fine and lucrative occupations have become extinct! Where is that famous Dacca muslin, Benares silk, Aurangabad's goldcloth, Bedar pottery, Kalipi paper, Kashmiri shawls, and the lined silken cloth of Lahore? Do you think that the people of Europe have confined themselves to produce and send only what finds a ready market? No, they always want to find out what is grown in India and how best it can be utilised and what are the things for which a market may be created here? That is why anything grown in India is shipped to England. Some of it is consumed in Europe itself while the remaining is sent back in a form which may find a market here. Indian artisans and craftsmen suffer because whatever they produce, they produce manually. And, you know there is a limit to a man's power. He must take rest. He can't work twenty-four hours. As against this, Europe has machines which are worked night and day without

any break. Why talk of Indians inventing machines when it will take ages before they even learn to use them properly? I agree that the ignorance of the Indian artisans and craftsmen is itself the cause of their ruin. But Indians are so lazy and dull that it is as if God had not given them the instinct to improve their condition. They want the Government to provide the wherewithal for everything.

'The real cause of the progress in Europe is the spread of modern sciences. Only that education can be of any use today which may create in the people here the spirit to think about matters of fact and ponder over natural phenomena. With the establishment of the Department of Education, people are showing more interest in education. Those who had no such tradition, and their number is very large, are now sending their children to be educated. Interest in English is also on the increase and it is gratifying to note that there is no more fury and hatred as before. Only the Muslims are showing reluctance, owing to their foolish prejudice, but it is temporary and short-lived. But let me say also that instead of gaining anything, the country is most likely to suffer from this education. People are going in for education only in the lust for jobs. To them service is the ultimate end of education and they are trained for service alone. All their education is restricted to achieve this ambition. I really wonder from where so many jobs will come. I think that the excessive interest in education is also due to the fact that there is no distinction between the upper and lower classes in getting a Government job. And, that is why education is becoming more popular among the lower people. Thus, to tell the truth, as of today whatever the Department of Education has been doing is just the opposite of what it should have done. We need those sciences which would help in developing our industries and crafts, whereas the people are now taught in a way that they come to despise their hereditary and ancestral occupations. Rather, they take to education to save themselves from their shame.

'Now, a few words about the people engaged in trade and commerce. I agree that people in these professions should not

have any cause for complaint under the English rule. There is peace and stability. Transport facilities are increasing day by day. Courts are working fairly well. What else does a businessman want? But business needs capital, and capital is what is most difficult to procure. So, this profession is a limited one which very few people can afford to take up in India. This is one thing. Secondly, the depression in industry and craft is actually the depression of trade and commerce itself. And just now I have shown how our industry has been decaying. As such, there is dullness in trade also. To tell the truth, all trade is in the hands of Europeans and I think Indians are only agents and not businessmen. They order goods from England and take their petty commission on it.

'So far I have spoken about the negative conditions and the reasons for them, as I assess them, of the Indians who fall into four classes based on occupation. Now, I propose to lay down before you a few more facts which have a bearing on all the Indians irrespective of their occupations and which contribute to their poverty. Indians by their temperament lead a simple and austere life. If they have any money left after meeting necessary expenditure on food, they get ornaments made for their womenfolk. In other words, they keep their savings in this form. Thus, a nation which generally has a hereditary tendency to lead a simple and austere life, should have a great many rich and wealthy citizens according to these standards. Before the English rule, most of us were prosperous. Now we see everyone's expenditure, high or low, is on the increase. And there are many reasons for it. First of all, it is becoming quite a fashion to spend lavishly on the ever new things of decoration and pomp and show imported from England. So much so that they are becoming the necessities of life. There are so many new and growing temptations to spend on now that a person, however thrifty, cannot resist it. For instance, the introduction of the railways has made travelling so easy and tempting that those who never went out of their places, now take a journey even when there is little or no need to do so. Then, once you decide to go by a train, why make a bundle of your clothes? How would you

manage it? It would be better to have a bag—you just have to put your clothes as well as other sundry things into it, lock it and have it handy. But a journey is after all a journey. You must have some ready cash with you. If you tie it round your waist, it is irksome. If you tie it in your trouser-string, it is equally uncomfortable. In your pocket, it is not safe. Putting it into the bag is also not advisable. To open the bag constantly is not safe lest anything should slip out. It is better to have a leather purse hung round the neck, and that'll do once and for all. But what about the wretched huqqa for smoking tobacco? You cannot smoke it in the train. Some people may secretly do it by burning coal, but one can't enjoy it when its tube is dry, and because of the nervousness lest the train should stop at a nearby station. So, a cheroot is better which you may smoke without any fear. Nobody would dare object to it. Passengers sitting around may also think that you are a man of status. But then, the cheroot may crack and then it is no good. So, it would be better to go in for a whole box to keep it fresh. You may put it even under a bench. The smallest box of the country-made cheroots costs only eight to ten annas. Not much to enjoy all the way. What better pastime is there for the idle hours on a train? The huqqa is really troublesome with its firepot, shard and coal. God forbid, all this along with the weight of one full man! How can one manage oneself with all this rubbish? Cheroots require only one matchbox which is required for a huqqa too. Look, the urchins are selling it on the pavement crying out "three for two pice and a *damrī* (a nominal coin)". They say that but they will give three for two pice only; that is, one and a half matchboxes for one pice but this is not rounded off into a whole and also, if you buy one matchbox, you will have to carry the change in *kaurīs* (small shells used as the smallest coins). But then, a matchbox is a useful thing, and it is always needed. Even if it is dampened a bit, it will dry in the sun and then it will flicker like gunpowder. Why not keep three boxes! They can be kept safely ready at hand to be used.

'Thus, there is a whole chain of necessities which imperceptibly go on increasing one by one. In the same way, the

postal system has led to an increase in correspondence. So much so that even if the sender and the addressee are unlettered and poor, they like to correspond once a month, if not more often to learn of one another's welfare.

'I remember when I was quite young, an umbrella was considered a necessary thing for a rich man. Now the situation is such that if you go to the main bazar it will appear as though a tent has been spread from one end to the other with the number of umbrellas being used. May I ask if people born in our country are now made of wax that they will melt away in the sun? Or, take the case of cloth which is no doubt a necessity. There are so many varieties in so many different designs, regularly imported from England. As it is mill-made, it is quite cheap as well. Most of the people are just fascinated by their designs and often purchase and wear them although they do not need them at all. To me it seems that civilisation and extravagance are inseparable. Thus, as civilisation spreads among Indians, their expenditure will also increase. It wouldn't matter if they could increase their incomes as well. But, on the contrary, their incomes are falling and thus they rightly dislike the increase in their expenditure. The common people who have no knowledge of affairs and who cannot apply their minds, unanimously say that "under the British rule there is peace and justice and no coercion and oppression but God knows, why there is none of the prosperity and happiness of earlier times. Money is lavishly spent as if it has no worth but even then one finds it hard to have both bread and cloth together." How can that be? The good old days are gone! The easy luxurious life which our ancestors enjoyed is gone with them. We have ourselves seen that a rupee's worth of grain could not be carried by one man. What can one say about the change of times? We still remember how one single rupee could buy thirty seers of white wheat of Dawoodi variety, well threshed and cleaned, or three and a half to four seers of pure granulated *ghee* (clarified butter) or five seers of white *khānd* (coarse sugar) or twenty seers of *gur* (raw sugar), or ten maunds of cowdung cakes, and so on. Now every thing has become scarce and costly. Just get a rupee

changed and it's gone! One may be wrong to find out the true cause of all this but it is valid to complain that the times have changed. It is true that we do not have heavy rains as we used to have. Forests and gardens are fast disappearing. There is deforestation and more land is being put under cultivation. And, in the natural sciences it is now a well established fact that trees attract more rains. That the forests have more rains proves it. Then the land-holders have been so hard pressed in the assessment of revenue that they have to pay the Government dues from their own pockets even when the whole village area is not cultivated every year. Thus, they perforce never leave the land to resuscitate itself. They would grow two crops from the one-crop field and four from the two-crop one if they could. Thus, land becomes degraded and less productive, and the people call it lack of prosperity.

'People also think that dishonesty is on the increase under the English rule. People are no longer fair in their dealings. They have grown ill-willed, deceitful and given to lying which inevitably leads to disputes between them even on minor issues. Just go to a court of law. There is such a huge number of cases that the judges have no time to spare. And, once you take a dispute to a court, you are just stuck there so to say. Firstly, there are so many courts, one upon the other that it is difficult to come out of these fields of molasses so to speak. And secondly, the attorneys and agents ensnare you in a way that a person, however clever, is duped by them. Gentlemen, you all know about the dispensation of justice in the courts. It is the general opinion of the people that actually to win there is to lose, and to lose is to die. As a matter of fact, what you have to undergo in the courts of law is so complicated that the disputing parties are just ruined by the expenses on stamp duties, service fees, remunerations and gifts made to attorneys. In other words, winning a case in a court of law means that the property in dispute is eaten up by the expenses of litigation. In fact, one is at a loss to understand that though all these laws and regulations are made to prevent and, when needed, settle the disputes, yet the outcome seems to suggest that the law is the cause of all

disputes. One of my friends is in service in a native state. I once asked him, "How do you settle the disputes in your state in the absence of an elaborate system of courts and established procedures?" He said, "Our people are not so quarrelsome. If there is a difference of opinion in any matter, they settle it among themselves. If any one even rarely, makes an appeal to us we just rely on the statements given on oath by the contending parties, or else make them agree to accept what a *panchāyat* (court of arbitration, consisting of five or more members), decides." Reiterating that there the people seldom lied, he emphatically said, "I have been working in this large territory as a Collector of Revenues for fifteen years and I have dealt with hundreds of cases but I have never heard of anyone taking a false oath."

'Now, if you think that the quality of the moral character of a people cannot be judged by the procedures adopted by the courts of law, I seek to present another argument. Take the widespread habit of drinking. A person who is not prohibited by his religion to drink and drinks moderately, has no cause to be condemned nor do I wish to do so. But I just want to know whether Indians are financially in a position to indulge in it which may finally make them gamblers, spendthrifts, idle, debauched, thieves and then be afflicted by various filthy diseases which lead to a miserable life and they become a curse to themselves and society. This should never be the policy of any wise government, particularly the English Government which is rightly proud of its wisdom and its pure religion. If the Government can control, nay, ban such a bad habit which our true Prophet, and according to you a great reformer of Arabia, has rightly called the mother of all evils and which the wise men of every age have condemned and which the doctors too say is harmful, then why shouldn't the Government use all its power to ban it for the good of the country?

'Gentlemen, I have bothered you too long and I fear I have marred such a nice dinner given by Noble Sahib. As far as the causes of the Mutiny are concerned, well, it is so wide a subject

that it may take weeks and weeks if I go on speaking like this everyday. However, whatever I have presently said must have made it clear that the English Government before the Mutiny was not popular with the masses. It is my faith and good wishes for both the Government and the subjects which have compelled me to say these words here. Before the Mutiny I was not at all concerned with the English Government and it had no right on me except that I happened to live in the city. But God willed it that Noble Sahib and I should meet each other unexpectedly and in strange circumstances. If I took him to my house and kept him there when he lay unconscious, it was only because of my sense of human duty. I had nothing else on my mind. Even the most far-sighted person couldn't have had an idea of the end result of the Mutiny at that moment and of the events that would follow and when. I well remember that I could not help myself when I saw him lying among the dead. I had not even thought of a place to hide him or how I would manage so that no one might come to know of his presence in my house. But in Noble Sahib's case, from the very beginning I have seen so many strange doings of God which human reason cannot explain. To tell the truth, it is God who saved him and none of my plans or anyone else's has anything to do with it. If his being saved is not the proof of the existence of God, and of the power of God, then I think, there can be no proof of anything in this world. Whatever contribution I may have made in my saving Noble Sahib, seems so insignificant that I feel very embarrassed even to mention it. Only Noble Sahib's graciousness has blown it out of proportion. If for his sake I accept my services as of any worth, Noble Sahib has personally recompensed me doubly and even more. Thus, the grant of land and the job which the Government has given me is nothing but a favour to me and that too undeserved. If I do not formally acknowledge it without expressing my deep-felt sense of being undeserving, I may be blamed for not only being undeserving but also unworthy of it. As soon as I learnt from Noble Sahib that the Government was going to treat me so kindly, I asked myself what I could do for the Government

in return? I neither had the money which I might present to the Government, nor was I a soldier by profession to lay down my life for it. I have nothing but my heart to give. So, before you, gentlemen, I hereby declare that I make an offering of my heart to the Government. God willing, I shall spend all my life in my endeavour to work for the betterment, firm establishment and strength of the Government and for making it more popular. May God help me!

'I have made a plan of work I propose to carry out and with your permission, gentlemen, I should like to share it with you. Ever since my youth I have been interested in history and current affairs. A short while ago, I severely criticised the Government administration. Nevertheless, I hereby acknowledge that as far as dispensation of justice, human sympathy, freedom of the subjects and making them civilised and caring for their welfare and progress of the country are concerned, no government in the world can be compared with the English Government. Its shortcomings, whatever they are, relate to its working, otherwise the world has not seen a better government so far, nor are such principles of governance to be found anywhere in the world today. I consider the English Government to be a God-sent boon and a blessing for India. Thus, my whole endeavour will be such that the subjects of India may take full advantage of it.

'In the final analysis the main cause of the English Government's shortcomings is that there is no rapport between the ruler and the ruled. They are not even well acquainted with each other. As I am a well-wisher of the Government, I venture forth to remove this estrangement between them. I feel that of all its subjects in India, it is particularly the Muslims whom the Government needs most to win over and encourage. Partly because of this and partly because I am a Muslim, my activities will be confined to the Muslim community. I know their nature, and that I must because I am proud to be a Muslim. I say it with full confidence that there is nothing in the religion of Islam which will make the Government unhappy with Muslims. There are both sorts of examples in the life of our Prophet. More than

half of his life of prophethood was spent in conditions when he was overpowered by the Quresh tribe of Mecca. They oppressed him and his companions in various ways because he opposed their religion, condemned idol-worship and believed in one God. They stopped him and his companions while they were on their way to the Ka'ba, and would not let them worship in their own way. They even boycotted and robbed them whenever they got an opportunity. Even in those conditions which continued for eleven years, the Prophet enjoined his followers to bear with patience the worldly pains in the path of God and to hope for good reward in the world hereafter. Meanwhile, the religion of Islam, because of its truth, was slowly spreading despite all these obstructions and adversities. Tired of all these difficulties, the Muslims even left their homes for the second time which event is known as *Hijra* (the Migration,* which counts as the beginning of the Muslim era). Even then the Quresh did not let them live in peace. In the meantime the Muslim community grew in number and was able enough to defend itself. In the second year of this second Hijra, the well-known battle of Badr was fought which marks the beginning of the ascendancy of Islam. The Muslims had many victories in the Arabian peninsula, the most famous of which and in fact which rid the Arabian peninsula of the evil of idol-worship, was the victory of Mecca. In history I have read about hundreds of victorious kings and generals. Killing and squandering, they marched into conquered lands. But look, here it was the triumphant entry of a Prophet into Mecca where the people had left no stone unturned in oppressing and disgracing him. But now the Prophet sat victorious in the Ka'ba, and a general amnesty was extended to the whole population of Mecca. In short, the religion of Islam, in itself, is so good that its followers can peacefully lead their lives in both the conditions, that is, when they are overpowered as well as when they have the upper hand. True, Islam does not have the upper hand under the English

---

*20 June 622 A.D.

rule but it is not so overpowered as it was in Mecca before the Hijra. Muslims enjoy religious freedom under the English rule as much as possible without having their own rule. Rather, even the Muslim rule does not give so much freedom. Thus, no Muslim, of whatever sect or whatever belief, can complain of the English rule on account of religion. This much may, however, be said that the Muslims, following the Hindus, have taken to observe non-commensality and have adopted their dress style and social manners. Whatever may be the cause of the decline of the Muslims in other lands, in India their associating with the Hindus has had an untoward effect on them. They too have become sceptics, cowards, low-spirited, homesick and ease-loving. The fault of the Muslims is that they avoid meeting the English and so they deprive themselves of many of the benefits of the English rule and are becoming poorer and worthless day by day. They are making the Government suspicious of them. God willing, I shall be able to remove this much Hindu influence of the Muslims. The religion of the Muslims is that of the modern age, and unlike other religions it has not yet lost its originality. I hope I shall be successful in every way. I know that the most effective way of giving advice is to set an example of oneself before others. That is why I never spoke about all these things until I myself adopted the lifestyle which I wish all Muslims to adopt. I have just shared a meal with you. Here, before you I stand, clad in the English dress. I am certainly as much of a Muslim as I was before. I know the Muslims for whose benefit I have adopted this lifestyle, will now make life more difficult for me. They already tease and ridicule me. But their teasing will be as short-lived as it will be of no consequence. The demands of the times and education are the two great helpers and I am fully confident that with the help of these two, a whole group of them will follow me very soon.

'With these words and begging your pardon for my long speech, I take my leave.'

12 Ibn-ul-Vaqt Faces Opposition

Perhaps, no task in the world is more difficult than to reform a people. But here we are not talking of a total reform which was actually the one that was carried out by our Prophet Muhammad. He was endowed with Prophethood among the Arabs, whose conditions, in those times, were the worst among the nations of the world. Poor Ibn-ul-Vaqt and his reform were nothing compared with that. It was just as the proverb goes, 'what's in a stonechat or the soup thereof?' All he had was a little ability. He himself had seen what Noble Sahib had pointed out emphatically, that the conditions of Muslims were deteriorating under the British rule. This was manifest to everyone else as well. When he pondered over it he found that the case of the Muslims was that of 'one living in the river and at war with the crocodile.' They were the subjects but they hated their rulers. They were the ruled but they tried to avoid their rulers. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was right to think thus. Now, because of his fellow-feeling and being a well-wisher of the Government, he wished to bring a rapprochement between the rulers and the ruled by the removal of fear and estrangement between the Muslims and the English. This was, in short, the essence of his plan of reform. He said to himself, 'It is the case of the strong versus the weak, of the victorious against the vanquished. But how will I be able to influence the strong and the victorious? The weak have to bear the brunt. Therefore, the Muslims should be persuaded to come closer to the Englishmen by their developing a likeness and resemblance to them, or learning the English language and adopting their lifestyle or in some other way.'

Later events will show how far his plans were right or wrong or to what extent he succeeded in his mission. We, however, consider his having adopted the lifestyle which he wanted others also to adopt, as the first step towards the success of his plan.

That he saved Noble Sahib in the days of the Mutiny amounted to an act of loyalty to the English Government. The Government readily rewarded him for it and he became an estate-holder and an Assistant Commissioner within a year. Now he has undertaken to work for the well-being of his people. But even as he works for reform, he is also soon to get the reward that awaits all reformers. The very next day the whole city was rife with rumours about him: 'Ibn-ul-Vaqt has become a Christian—He eats his meal with an Englishman—he dresses like them.' Rumour begets rumour. It gets enlarged twice as much and over again as it passes from one to the other. Someone even said, 'With my own eyes I have seen him going into a church with the Englishmen. Perhaps, he might have gone there to say his namāz!'

Another man responded, 'Why, my dear, you are a Muslim and you say "might have gone". Ask forgiveness from God, man!'

A third said, 'Well, we have never seen or heard of such a thing before! How did it happen so suddenly?'

'Wonderful, you live in the city, and you don't know anything about it! Don't you know even this much,' he said leaning towards him and whispering, 'that he had hidden an Englishman in his house during the Mutiny?'

'Yes, he did. So what? There were many others who wished the Government well. They became informers, dug out people's hidden money, became witnesses and even had people sent to the gallows! What has one's wishing well to do with Christianity?'

'My dear, lust for the world is very bad, and strange are the ways of the world. The Mutiny has suited and brought prosperity only to this man. Not even a child in his family has been put to harm. Not a penny has he lost. Land, worth several thousands of rupees, belonging to a helpless land-holder of the district of Gurgaon was confiscated from him because of his involvement in the Mutiny. And now it has been given to Ibn-ul-Vaqt. He has been appointed a Deputy. Wishing well alone couldn't do all these miracles!'

A fourth man said, 'But it's terrible! To think of a learned

scholar like him and one of such a noble family becoming a Christian! It's a disgrace to Islam.'

The second man said, 'God has exalted Islam, and God-willing, it will remain exalted till doomsday. And don't talk of learning and scholarship. You know Satan was the teacher of all the angels. Did all his learning help him?'

For weeks, nay, for months Ibn-ul-Vaqt was the talk everywhere. The common masses entertained one thought: 'He has become a Christian; he has become a Christian!' They kept harping on it. According to them his taking meals with an Englishman and that too on a dining table with a fork and knife just like the Englishmen, and putting on the English dress meant that he had become a Christian. And what better subject could the Indian newspapers have? It was a good pastime. Urchins in the street would have hooted at him had he not left the city. For, who would go all the way to the far off English Camp outside the city? Who would dare to? All of them feared the Englishmen. In the courts, however, everyday scores of people saw him clad in English dress and taking his lunch and smoking cheroots in the company of Englishmen. The real distress was felt, as a matter of fact, by the members of his family. People would unnecessarily tease them. They had become the target of reproof because of him.

It is a common way of thinking that when a nation declines, all its thoughts and deeds and beliefs become worthless in the eyes of others. It has been aptly said, 'Everything of one who has fallen on bad days is regarded as bad'. What a good religion God had bestowed on Muslims which made the wild camel-lifters of Arabia the masters of the world, and that too in such a short time which has had no precedence in the annals of the world. Then, if you just ponder over it, besides being plain and simple, Islam is a religion which does not come from without. It is natural as it comes from within.

In other words, it is innate in man, rooted in his nature and can, in no circumstance, be separated from him. The proof that the circle of Islam is very large indeed and that the Prophet was proud to have a large following is evident in that the Prophet of

Islam was the last of the Prophets, and the Messenger of God sent for all. The Muslims in the early days of Islam strived and worked to increase their numbers. Compare them with the Maulvis of our age who declare the people unbelievers or outcastes on petty issues. To them, Ibn-ul-Vaqt represented not only one unbeliever but a whole group of unbelievers thrown into one. The *Hanafites*, the *Shāfe'ites*, the *Sunnīs*, the *Shī'as*, the *Wahābīs*, the heretics, in fact, all sections of Muslims in India unanimously issued decrees on Ibn-ul-Vaqt's infidelity based on the authority of the verses of the Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet. We also happened to see one such fatwā. More than a fatwā, it looked like a good illustration of Euclid's first theorem, and had the impressions of seals of various shapes —square, rectangular and oval. Some of them were as large as the palm of a man's hand and some were made in the decorative *tughrā* style of writing, more complicated than the labyrinthian passage of Emperor Humayun's tomb at Delhi. It was a decree made in Delhi. The seals too were of the learned scholars of Delhi but one couldn't make out which was which. Being at a loss to decipher, we asked a man who was holding a copy of the decree, 'Well sir, who is this gentleman—Servant of the Exalted *Sharī'ah* and the Bright Mohammadan Community, Hafiz Haji Sheikh Abu'l Fazā'il Muhammadan-al-Sāhir renowned as Moinuddin Hanafi, Qadiri Avesi Mazindarani and Bukhari?'* The decree-bearer said, 'Don't you recall? It's the same Maulvi Moona who gives religious sermons every Friday in the mosque in the shoemakers' locality.'

'So, now a religious decree has to be under the seal of one like Maulvi Moona.'

The decree-bearer replied, 'Sir, if you don't get it signed under his seal, he condemns you in his sermons using expletives. But then, he is courteous to all. In controversial matters he doesn't mind if both the contending parties get his seal of approval.'

---

*Here, the author is using satire.

The Indians teased Ibn-ul-Vaqt and often called him names. It must have been unpleasant for him but he never showed it. With aversion he heard all this through one ear and let it go out from the other with a feeling of disgust. If he had become a Christian, people wouldn't have oppressed him. Only his relatives and some other near and dear ones would have cried but sooner or later they too would have forgotten all about it. But the problem was that with his English lifestyle he called himself a Muslim which irritated them.

All the civil and military officers stationed in Delhi had been present at Noble Sahib's dinner party. They had seen him and heard his every word. A few days later Ibn-ul-Vaqt invited all those in the Camp to dinner. Not all of them but those who were more close to Noble Sahib, attended it. A few others also came. Informal relations and intimacy take time to develop. They do not develop simply on the first acquaintance. There were already many obstacles. Firstly, it was an entirely new phenomenon. From the very beginning of English rule such a thing had never happened in this part of the country. No Indian had wished to join the English society as its equal by the adoption of the English lifestyle. The rajas, nawabs and the babus, all had to see the high English officials some time or the other but they kept their Indian manners. Wearing their tasselled turban with '*lamāma* (the head-cloth) and the gown and cloak with a shawl in winter, and a waist-string fastened under it, they went to meet the officials at their place in the mornings before it was time for the court to be held. They never met them on Sundays. Leaving their carriages outside the enclosure of the bungalow, and sending word of their arrival through a servant, they would wait in the verandah, to be called in by the Sahib. When called in, they took off their shoes at the door. When they presented themselves before them, they bowed down to pay their respects and said whatever they had to say in a low voice, and then asked for their leave. They avoided looking directly at the Sahibs and left for their homes after they had paid the custom to the orderlies and servants. But Ibn-ul-Vaqt's way was different. He would never go to see an Englishman unless he

had been already introduced by some friend. How could he? If he was riding a horse or sitting in his horse-carriage, he would straightaway enter the verandah. The orderly would become alert when he heard the sound of the hooves of his horse and would be ready to take his visiting card to the Sahib. He would come forward to receive him and after taking the card from him he would run inside. Just after him would follow Ibn-ul-Vaqt himself. In all probability he would find the host in the verandah or at the door. And, if he found the host disinclined to meet him, Ibn-ul-Vaqt would at once mount his horse and leave, seldom observing the code of etiquette. Coming face to face, both of them would utter, 'Good morning, how do you do?' They would shake hands and enter the room. No one would know what they talked about. One could only hear them laughing together. In short, Ibn-ul-Vaqt behaved in a way that made most of the Englishmen avoid him.

Then, he was not fluent in English although his connections were only with Englishmen. Thus, they accepted him in their society but not with an open heart. However, these contacts continued to grow. This was enough to fuel the envy of his compatriots. Their opposition caused him much trouble all his life and impeded his work. The Englishmen had no reason whatsoever to envy him but most of them in their arrogance of being the rulers were also strongly opposed to him. But Noble Sahib was there to back him. He was gentle and an honourable officer highly respected by the Englishmen. His ability and efficiency were acknowledged by the Government, and everyone knew that he was likely to be entrusted with some important assignment soon. But he was, after all, one single individual. Still, was it an achievement of little significance that now Ibn-ul-Vaqt because of his riches and honour was in a position to be bold enough to meet senior English officials? Whatever contacts he had developed with the Englishmen were entirely because of Noble Sahib. But for his help, he could not have even thought of reform.

Thus, ostensibly the circumstances were favourable. A high-ranking Englishman like Noble Sahib was his patron-guardian.

He was himself a well-wisher of the Government, an estate-holder, and Extra Assistant and an officer posted in his own city entrusted with the job of investigating the cases of revolt. And then, he was in the service of a Government which had no equal to it in those days. His income from land and service, together with no obligation to go to England like the Englishmen, was high enough for anyone who could have one foot in England and live in India in any style he liked. His physical demeanour also befitted the lifestyle he wanted to adopt. Despite all this, from the very beginning he had to face obstacles which did not give him respite until the very end. Anyone else would have been unnerved by the opposition and given up the task of reform. But he was an extremely steady man. He gathered more courage and grew all the more determined in the face of difficulties. He felt sad, regretful, annoyed, but not even for a moment did he think of giving up the lifestyle he had adopted or becoming slack in the work he had undertaken.

Originally, religious reference was outside the plan of his action but the Muslims attacked him primarily on religious grounds. This made him think that it was religion which had made the Muslims powerful and which was now ruining them. He came to realise that they wouldn't do anything without the sanction of their religion and that their prosperity was not possible unless their concept of religion was reformed. With this thought in his mind he interfered with their religious concepts. It wouldn't have mattered much if this debate was confined to the extent that Ibn-ul-Vaqt needed it. But as it gathered momentum, there were arguments and counter-arguments about the right and wrong. There are a score of religions in India itself which continuously oppose one another but we have never seen or heard of any religion being subdued or becoming extinct as a result of some religious debate. On the contrary, religious differences are on the increase day by day. It was said there would be 'seventy and two' sects among Muslims. But in India we had only a few viz. the Sunnīs, the Shī'ahs, the Hanafites, the Shāfe'ites and the Sufis. Now before our own eyes, among the Sunnīs alone so many new sections have come up—the

Wahābīs, the heretics, the *muqallids*,* the *ghair muqallids*,* *duāllīn*** and *zuāllīn*** etc. You find this curse of antagonism not only in India and in religion but in every country and in everything.

In short, religiously speaking, Ibn-ul-Vaqt had his own interpretations. English education instilled in him thoughts of freedom, and the desire for absolute freedom stirred thousands of people. They were restive and looking for an opportunity to give vent to their feelings. Such people considered it their good luck to make Ibn-ul-Vaqt their shield. Thus, there cropped up a large group of Muslims of new thinking just like the swarming worms which creep out of the earth after the first shower in the rainy season. Had there been some temptations also along with the change in lifestyle and reform in beliefs, more than half the Muslims might have taken to the new way like the proverbial sheep. But on the one hand, members of his community severely criticised and admonished him and on the other hand, the English people were indifferent to him, and the change in lifestyle also did not suit anyone. The result was that such people were 'neither here, nor there; they were lost.' They were blighted as soon as they had sprouted.

13 English Lifestyle and Islam

Religion is the name given to a man's thoughts of a certain nature, which are imbedded in his heart and which God has so sealed like an envelope that no one can ever know what is in another's heart. Besides this, religion is a relation between man and God and no one has a right, nor is there any need, to

---

*Followers of any one of the four principal schools of Muslim Law, and those who do not follow them, respectively.

**Those who pronounce the beginning letter *zuād* of the Qur'anic word *zuāllīn* as the letter *dāl*, or as the letter *zāl*, respectively.

interfere in the religious matters of others. As such, we have no right to object to Ibn-ul-Vaqt's religious beliefs. But since he claims that both the religious and worldly conditions of Muslims must be reformed, we have to take an account of his religious thoughts. As we have it from his close relatives and friends who had been with him night and day or who were his neighbours, he was just like any other orthodox Muslim, observing the *Shar'* (the Divine Law) till he was twenty or so. He was so particular even about saying the *nafl* and *mustahabb* (voluntary and desirable prayers) that God grant us that same diligence in saying our *farz* and *vājib* (compulsory and deemed to be necessary prayers). He would never miss the *takbīr-e-tahrīma* (words magnifying God at the commencement of all the five compulsory prayers) at the Jama Masjid. Besides the supernumerary *tahajjud* and *ishrāq* (prayers at midnight and after the sunrise, respectively), he would also say *tahayyat-ul-masjid* (prayers in salutation to a mosque) and *salāt-ul-tasbīh*, prayers extolling the perfection of God by saying *subhān-a'l-lāh* (Glory to God). He would also regularly repeat the devotional exercises such as *manzil-e-Fīl*, *dalā'il ul-khairāt* and *hizb-ul-bahr*, the sixtieth part of the Qur'an, and God knows how many more. On Fridays, he would make special preparations from the morning for the noon prayers. It was also his general practice to observe fasts in *ayyām-e-baiz* (the middle of the lunar months when the moon is at the brightest). He abstained from taking meat, etc., for a long time and also underwent forty days' worship in seclusion and other such strenuous religious exercises. Thus, people thought that he would become a disciple of Shah Haqqani, the saint. At one time he was inclined towards the Hindu jogīs and *sanyāsis* (the ascetics). And then, he joined the *ahl-e-hadīth*, the followers of the Traditions of Prophet Muhammad, whom the people critically called the Wahābīs. It is difficult to put in words how enamoured he had become of the Christian missionaries a few days before the Mutiny. Then, his religious thoughts took a different turn in the company of Noble Sahib which led him closer to the English. There is no denying the fact that he had grown a bit shaky in his religious

thinking but he never showed any laxity in his formal religious duties until he changed his lifestyle. Even after this change, he was often seen saying his prayers alone in the mosque, if not in a congregation. In the beginning when he was rather punctilious in saying his prayers and observing the fasts, all the Hindu and the Muslim staff of the court affirmed that however busy he might be, he had never missed the saying of his prayers. All of them said, 'He does say his prayers, though at times not as scheduled. Every day we see him saying the noon and afternoon prayers in his private room when the court is sitting.' But it was a bit uncomfortable to say the prayers in English dress. The coat could be hung on a peg but these bloody pants would not let him sit comfortably. It was also inconvenient to take them off and then put them on again. Further, the required personal cleanliness which is the primary condition of one's saying prayers presented the greatest difficulty. Then, often it so happened that someone would find his courtroom empty while he was saying his prayers in the inner chamber, or that it was time for his prayers and some Englishmen would come to meet him and he could not leave their company, or that some English judge would pass by his room after adjourning his court and invite him for a walk or to a game of billiards. Such situations arose often and then it was not possible for him to say his prayers. A great obstacle was that most of the Englishmen regarded strict adherence to religion as foolishness and a weakness of the mind.

In short, the English society first made him irregular in the saying of his prayers. Then his voluntary prayers in the tradition of Prophet Muhammad were given up and he said only his compulsory prayers and these too with the shortest *suras* (chapters of the Qur'an) being recited: in the first *rak'at* (unit of prayer) he would recite *sūrah al-'Asr* (Time through the Ages) and in the second, *sūrah al-Kausar* (The Abundance). He would say his afternoon and evening prayers together. For some time he saw to it that he said the prayers he had missed but then he had to give this up. And finally, it was no prayers at all, nor any need to abstain from the sharing of meals with the Englishmen. He was determined to become more close to them. But without

drinks that wouldn't be easy. Why should he be worried now about being accused of drinking? Hardly anything was left which he had not already adopted. But we know for certain that he abstained from drinking not because his religion, Islam, prohibited it but because the doctors had warned him that he would become a leper if he took to it. But then there are many English dishes which have liquor as one of their ingredients and many medicines which cannot be prepared without it. In fact, it is commonly used in the English system of medicine. To take to the English lifestyle and abstain from drinking is just like 'dealing in dirt without getting the fingers fouled.' Then, the respected members of the English society, the dogs, were there. How could Jan Nisar, who was like a caressing governess in helping Ibn-ul-Vaqt to adopt the new lifestyle have forgotten this pre-requisite of anglicism? He had already arranged many breeds of dogs for him. A few of them always followed him as if they were his twins. In short, within one month of the change in his lifestyle, there apparently remained no trace of Islam in Ibn-ul-Vaqt and his household effects. If a stranger were to visit his bungalow he wouldn't have been able to judge whether it was the house of an Englishman or of a simple Indian whose anglomania had led him to leave his family and people and live in seclusion in a jungle away from his native city.

To err is human, except by one who is destined by God to remain innocent. Ibn-ul-Vaqt also made mistakes. As long as he regarded the change in lifestyle as useful, his mistake could do no harm to him or to others. But since he was intelligent, the poor fellow started to twist the meanings of religious terms in order to approve of his deeds and insist on them. By his nature he was stubborn and when the Muslims called his deeds, acts of apostasy, he became all the more adamant. Whether the Muslims gained anything out of it or not, is another matter, but by his opening the door of interpretation according to himself, and by the turning of the language from the obvious meaning, he created a big fissure. Like a gnawing rodent, English education is so bent on the destruction of the edifice of religion that it hollowed out the very foundations of all religions, including

Christianity. To this were added now, in the case of Islam, these white ants of fallacious interpretations. People were already tired of the rigours of religion. Now they got an excuse, as the proverb goes, 'the drowsy drop when someone shoves them.' What can be done? We are also tempted to go forth and take the oath of allegiance to Ibn-ul-Vaqt and thus free ourselves from the stress and strain of dos and don'ts of religion but our conscience would not allow it. Ibn-ul-Vaqt and all his followers, or rather the like-minded people, depended solely on intellect and that is why that those who thought that they had become wise after learning a little of English were soon deluded by him.

14 Religion and Intellect

We do not want to enter into polemics with such people in this book. However, we would like to say that of all the outward and spiritual powers that God the Most Bountiful has bestowed on man, intellect is the most powerful. It is the moving spirit behind the whole Shar'. But it is only a power, and no more. Just like the other powers of man, it is also limited and imperfect. For instance, an eye can see only to a certain distance and not beyond its ken. It cannot see without light, or through thick bodies. If a man is moving or is in a moving train or boat, he sees just the opposite. It appears to him as if the stationary things are moving and he is himself stationary. Fast movement appears to give a separate form as when the children turn a burning stick round and round. A stick placed vertically in a pot of water gives a bent look. Objects lying at the bottom of clear water appear raised. In optics they discuss such other illusions. In short, just as the power of seeing is limited and imperfect, our intellect too has limitations. It is not infallible and it also commits mistakes. Difference of opinion is sufficient proof of this fact. The science of numbers is an exception because it is based on the principles of self-evident truths and therefore, there is no question of a difference of opinion. Otherwise, we see

doctors, philosophers, judges, astronomers, politicians and men of religion who constantly argue with each other. Principles of logic are framed and rules of debates are laid down but the difference of opinion never grows less nor is it likely to be so until doomsday. As the Qur'an says: 'If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind One People: but they will not cease to dispute except those whom thy Lord hath bestowed His Mercy: and for this did He create them.' (11:118–19). When these people are diametrically opposed to each other, one of them is bound to be wrong. Thus, the imperfection of human intellect can easily be deduced by the very fact that difference of opinion exists. We may elaborate it further.

During the last two hundred years or so, the Europeans have made hundreds of new discoveries. Even if someone had discovered a sure method to make gold and had made it public for the good of all, it would not have been as beneficial as these discoveries have been. God rewards the efforts of those fortunate ones who devote themselves to ponder over natural facts and phenomena. They are diving in the bottomless ocean of phenomena and bringing out precious pearls to gain more and more knowledge. 'And, there is not a thing but its (sources and inexhaustible) treasures are with Us; but We only send down thereof in due and ascertainable measures.' says the Qur'an. (15:21). Let us take only one of these discoveries which is so common and which we have also been benefiting from because of the English. Fire was known to all. We could cook our food. Everyone knew what steam was. But why is it that the power of steam was not discovered thousands of years ago? And, this question may be raised about any discovery made so far or to be made in future. Sir Isaac Newton who first discovered the law of gravitation said, 'I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I have been only like a boy playing on the seashore and diverting myself now and then finding a smoothe pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.' These are the words of a man who discovered the relation between the heaven and the earth and established his system in place of Ptolemy's. The whole

of Europe is proud of him today. Just see, those whom God has given intellect, humbly confess their inability. But look at the English-educated people of today. Just ask them to explain some new simple Euclid's theorem. They look blank and slink away but continue to boast and give themselves airs as if they knew everything and claim that no one equals them. Thus, as time goes on and there is progress and more progress, the imperfection of human intellect becomes palpably clear. Just think, only a hundred and fifty years ago who could think that we would be able to cover long distances in a few hours instead of several months, or that we could know all about places thousands of miles away in a few moments, or that we would be able to make ice by using fire, or that we could get large fine-folded pieces of cloth by simply putting cotton into textile machinery? And, who knows what other things we may be able to do? But with all that, we will remain men, helpless, insignificant and of no real worth. How can man be proud of his intellect when he does not even know about the things nearest to him? What does he know about the soul and the relation it has with the body? When we think about the eternity of Time, man's existence in this world appears to be as short-lived as the twinkling of an eye—rather, less than that! And, on such a transitory existence, just see man's intentions and ambitions as if he does not wish to be contained between the heaven and the earth! Just think how many men there were who shook the whole world but ultimately passed away. They proved to be nothing but a handful of dust. After all, what was it that went out of them? There seems to be an unending cycle of animals, vegetation, and millions of other creatures that are born of dust and then vanish away into it. Can anyone's intellect tell what is going on? And, what is the purpose behind it? Vegetation too has a kind of life in it and many of the actions of animals resemble those of man's. In fact, some of the animals excel man in some respects. But when we ponder over such matters, we know all their excellence is God-given and instinctive. Then, what is that final perfection for which they are given this existence? The English people have left no stone unturned in

research but from the very beginning to now no continuous link has been found anywhere about any place or thing. The more we go into the past, the more the perspective grows obscure and dim so that no one knows what the world was like four or five thousand years ago. What greater failure of human intellect is there than that even today no one knows the nature of any single thing? At the most they have discovered the properties and that is hardly two per cent of what is known. Take water, for instance. We only know that, it is a liquid, it can easily take any shape, it is transparent if it is pure and unmixed, it flows downwards, it cannot rise higher than thirty-three feet into the air according to the law of specific gravity, and it is converted into air by heat. An expert of natural science may show us one or two more of its properties. But these are its properties and not its nature. Whether it is Ibn-ul-Vaqt or anyone else from amongst the highly English-educated ones of today, just ask him about the nature of things and all his intellect disappears. The world is a place of cause and effect. There is a chain of events which take place one after the other. The preceding event we term as the 'cause' or 'causer' and the following one as 'the caused' or 'effect' or 'the result'. Although very many mistakes are made in our determining 'the cause' yet even if we do not make any mistake, no one knows the secret of the relation between cause and effect. For instance, to burn is a property of fire, and a magnet draws iron towards it, but no one can tell why. Just look towards the sky. All the deserts of the world would not have so many grains of sand as there are stars in the sky. Then, these stars appear to be tiny dots but actually each one of them is a world in itself, so large that our earth has no significance against it. To one who wants to understand the world, it seems to be a complete mystery, full of magic and wonder. When such is the failure of human intellect in understanding the essence of worldly things, how can it be our guide in matters of religious faith? A poet has aptly said:

> When you have not finished the work of the world
> How dare you set out to accomplish
> The works of the heaven!

Then, this is only the visible world in which we live. We see

it with our own eyes. We can bring some change in it as we do, but religion tells us that there is another world beyond it. This world is visible and that is invisible; this is mortal and that is immortal; this is illusory and that is real; this is preparative and that is the real purport; this is a test and that is the result; this is a journey and that is the destination; this is a dream and that is the interpretation; this is fiction and that is reality. Thus, it is evident that human intellect should not know anything about that world because it is much beyond its reach. But it was far from the kindness of God that man, who is the crown of His creation, should remain quite ignorant of that world. Just as He has bestowed different properties to others, He has bestowed the sense of discrimination between good and bad to human intellect. Even the most ignorant and uncivilised man is inclined towards good, not because of lust for any worldly gain; and he keeps himself away from evil, not because of any fear of worldly loss, but because the human heart is like a magnetic needle, and goodness is the direction of the North. It is in the nature of man that he should like goodness and dislike evil.

Now, along with the power of discrimination between good and bad, man also knows that every deed has its results. Generally, we see the results of our deeds in this very world but in some cases it is not so. We also see that it is human nature to expect some other results besides the worldly ones. It shows there needs must be another world and there is verily a need for its existence. We have little understanding, information or knowledge, or whatever you may call it, about that world. Human intellect shows no slackness on its part and strives hard to know about that world but it gets nothing:

> Nothing is known about the world of non-existence
> Or what goes on with those who have gone there
> For, no one comes back
> To tell anything good or bad!

Still, we do not know why our heart itself testifies that though we cannot avoid death yet we shall continue to exist after death

in some form or the other. Thus, only to this extent can our intellect take us:

> If I fly beyond this even by the breadth of a hair
> The Flame of Splendour will burn my wings!

However, the problem still remains unsolved. Human hearts are eager, as ever, to know in detail about *that* world. Now, if one wished to proceed further into the realm of religion, one should blow off the lamp of intellect and make the world-illumining-sun-like *vahī* (the divine revelation) one's guide and leader.

From all this explanation, however short, we can know the extent to which human intellect can take us in matters of religion. It was not a minor error on Ibn-ul-Vaqt's part that he wished religion to be subservient to intellect. As such, the very beginning of his religious reform was wrong and he had differences not with Islam alone but with all the religions of the world. True, man has always an urge to use all his powers. It is not possible for him to be endowed with intellect and not have the urge to make use of it. But what we mean to say is that there should be moderation in the use of all the physical and intellectual powers. It is the essence of ethics as well. Whoever wishes to make intellect the touchstone of religion should no more expect success than a man who wishes to use the sense of sight and uses instead his sense of hearing, or when he uses the sense of smell instead of the sense of taste. The wealth of religion is not a thing to be had by one's artfulness, sharpness of intellect, or by quickness of mind. Those who deserve it are the simple and the artless, ('the people of the Heaven are innocent'), the meek and humble, the complaisant, and the sober and modest. A great besetting danger is that a person who brings in excessive reason and intellect in matters of religion starts with the particulars, with the ramifications, with ambiguities or the resemblances and finally comes to discuss the whole, the first principles and the incontrovertible, as was the case with Ibn-ul-Vaqt. One who has such a disposition should be careful from the very beginning. He should first remove all such scruples from his mind and then ponder over the glory of God the Most

Glorious and Majestic, His omnipotence, His grandeur, the order of the world and its revolutions, and over its malignity. Only then it may be hoped that he would feel better.

15 People's Displeasure

We have to repeat that though it was the people who first brought in religion in the criticism of Ibn-ul-Vaqt, for him to do so was ill-advised as it proved to be a great hindrance to his programme of reform. More and more Muslims started detesting him because of the differences in beliefs. To tell the truth, he neither remained a reformer nor a renewer of faith. Rather, he came to be regarded as a founder of a new faith. Obviously, in such a situation when the Muslims were entirely opposed to him, he couldn't do much for them. If he said 'it is day', they would say 'it is night'. They had developed such a mistaken notion about him that all his efforts were interpreted as the outcome of his having selfish ends. This is not limited to reform alone. If any new movement has a good start, it goes well; if it is rejected once, it is very difficult to carry it through. From the beginning to the end Ibn-ul-Vaqt had to face many unfavourable circumstances. However, his first two years were years of success because his patron Noble Sahib was present whose kindly support grew more and more everyday. It was because of his patronising attitude that no one, whether it was an Englishman or an Indian, dared enter into any conflict with him. Both Ibn-ul-Vaqt and Noble Sahib had already made a fair and just assessment of the Mutiny, and people regarded justice to be the greatest mercy in those days. Thus, in matters of investigation too, Ibn-ul-Vaqt earned a good name. As Noble Sahib favoured him, his ability and efficiency became well known. The high officials also came to regard him as a man of sound judgement, well informed, unbiased and fair minded. Often, it so happened that if a query was addressed to Noble Sahib, it was indirectly

suggested that he should also consult his assistant, Ibn-ul-Vaqt, in that regard. And, Noble Sahib himself referred to his opinion in every matter. In every official letter he would remark that 'my Assistant, Ibn-ul-Vaqt, too agrees or disagrees with me and that his opinion is also attached herewith for due consideration'.

All was going well. But the fire of jealousy was raging in the hearts of the people and they were waiting for an opportunity. They spoke against him as they pleased. Ibn-ul-Vaqt did not bother about it but what damaged him and his plans was that people went to the senior officials and carried tales about him. Long after the Mutiny there was so much work to be done in the courts that though the Investigation of Revolt was a separate department yet there were five Deputy Collectors. All of them were the Hindus, Bengali bābus and the Eurasians. Of course, how could there be any Muslims? They were the condemned ones! Firstly, at that time, there was the oppressive attitude of the Government, strictness in revolt-investigation and orders to deposit arms, and rampant spying by one against the other. Secondly, of all the former Indian officials some had gone underground and some had been implicated in the revolt. In short, all of them were at once suspended. The newly appointed were dullards, blindly picked up on recommendations without any consideration of their competence or respectability. How could they have any determination? However much Ibn-ul-Vaqt prodded them to work along with him, they just flopped down. They could be forced to grasp a live snake but it was impossible to get them to shake hands with Englishmen as equals. Ibn-ul-Vaqt once tried to encourage one of those bābu Deputy Collectors. With his mutilated pronunciation he said, 'I understand it all but I cannot face an English Sahib.' Partly because of their weak nature and habit of flattery and partly because of their jealousy of Ibn-ul-Vaqt, some of them, without rhyme or reason, caused him much injury. They would even unnecessarily humble themselves before the higher officials in order to set them against Ibn-ul-Vaqt. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was thus obliged to keep a distance from his own group. But for how long? He had invited this trouble himself because he wanted to

develop contacts with the Englishmen. Meeting them and as often as possible, was more important to him than all his work. So, he met them at a time when Indians and particularly his colleagues were not there. Thus, he had to seek such opportunities. He invited some Englishmen to dinner. Then, there were four or five civil and military officers in the Camp whom he met now and then when they invited him. Most of the other Englishmen he met in the club of which Noble Sahib had forcibly made him a member. Then, there were morning and evening walks, cricket, billiards, hunting and all sorts of parties which he made a point to attend. The fact is that it is money that counts and unlike the Englishmen, Ibn-ul-Vaqt did not object to spending it.

The greatest enemies of the Muslims and the Hindus and of everyone else, particularly of Ibn-ul-Vaqt, were the Eurasians and these people would always surround him in their greed for wine and soda and lemonade and cheroots. One may criticise the change in his lifestyle but Ibn-ul-Vaqt remained a sober man. He took a long time to open up and be frank and that too not with everyone. Of the hundreds of people who came to him he was informal only with a few and again not always but on particular occasions. A man of such a temperament comes to command respect from friend or foe alike whether one likes it or not. No one would, or could, say anything uncharitable in his face, yet the people bore no goodwill for him in their hearts. So, one day all of them spat their venom against him.

There was only one school run by the American mission in that area where they taught crafts besides the three R's. Such a school was in fact very much needed there. Therefore, it was always crowded like a beehive by the boys seeking admission. The Rev. Father at the school was quite affable. He used to invite all the elites and persons of rank and dignity to the annual meetings of the school. Interesting magic shows with the help of electricity and magnets were also presented to entertain them. The annual meeting of the school was to be held shortly. The Father had already requested Ibn-ul-Vaqt to attend it and deliver a lecture as well. Ibn-ul-Vaqt had agreed. But about the same

time some of his English friends also requested him to take them to his estate on a hunting expedition. Ibn-ul-Vaqt had the Father's invitation in mind but he could not defer his friends' requests either. He was helpless. He went with them but made sure that he would not miss the meeting. But it so happened that an Englishman fell from his horse while they were hunting. Ibn-ul-Vaqt had to take care of him and so could not attend the meeting. He conveyed his regrets to the Father well in time. The Father also regretted it. He wished some other Indian to deliver the lecture but no one agreed. In short, everything went on well, but the lecture which the Father was delightfully looking forward to, could not be delivered. Well, when the presentations were over, the people engaged themselves in talk. The Father said, 'I regret Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt's absence has marred our happiness today. He would have certainly delivered a very good lecture which would have pleased the audience, and the students would have certainly benefited from it.'

An English judge then remarked, 'Of course, Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt is a good speaker and an enlightened man. I haven't seen any Indian so fluent in English. I still remember the first speech he delivered at Mr Noble's dinner. Your presentations were, no doubt, amusing, interesting and educative too, but Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt would have made them lively and all the more enjoyable by his speech.'

A Eurasian Deputy Collector leant backwards to a Kāyasth (a Hindu caste) Deputy Collector and said, 'Do you know why Ibn-ul-Vaqt Sahib is absent?'

The Kāyasth replied, 'I have just learnt here that he had gone with some English officers on a hunting expedition a week ago.'

The Eurasian said, 'Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt is very fond of hunting. I often hear that he has gone hunting.'

'Oh yes, any hobby becomes him as they say, "bring in a patron and eat the pie." On the other hand, there are some other Deputy Collectors like me in the same salary grade and with the same powers but so unlucky. My father passed away, and my maternal aunt, too. But as I saw that my boss was not inclined to grant me leave, I did not even apply for it. Service binds one.'

The Eurasian said, 'The Collector Sahib never likes to grant

leave. My wife and daughter were to go to a hill station. I told him about it but he plainly said "no". Anyway, I've heard that Noble Sahib wishes to go to England very soon.'

A Joint Magistrate corrected him, 'No, no. He had only applied for leave. The Commissioner did not grant it to him and told him that it was not proper to leave until the revolt investigations were complete.'

The Eurasian laughed, 'What will Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt do if Noble Sahib goes? Maybe, he will also go to England with him!'

The Joint Magistrate said, 'Maybe! Let us see who will be the Collector then?'

'Who else? It will be your good self who will take charge by the grace of God. We, your humble servants, have been praying for this for a long time,' said the Kāyasth solicitously.

The Eurasian, not to be left out, added, 'Sir, I shall be too happy to see you as the Collector!'

The Joint Magistrate said, 'I wonder if Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt would then think of coming to my residence wearing his cap and shoes? He is an Indian and I will teach him how an Indian should respect his officers. I do not at all agree with Noble Sahib as far as Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt is concerned. That he deserved both service and an estate, I agree, but he has no right to show disrespect to the Sahibs.'

The Eurasian said pointing to the Kāyasth Deputy Collector, 'I appreciate your views. After all, he is also a Deputy. Why shouldn't he entertain such presumptuous thoughts?'

The Kāyasth answered, 'All of us Hindus believe as a matter of religious faith that the ruler is equal to God.'

'I can't understand why a man of such thoughts and temperament did not become a rebel in the days of the Mutiny?' the Joint Magistrate said.

'He is rebellious at heart and I cannot believe that he really meant to rescue Noble Sahib,' said the Eurasian.

'Mr ..., there I don't agree with you. Noble Sahib is, in fact, a better judge in this regard. He had been with him in those days. He is very much sure that Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt is a true well-wisher of the Government,' the Joint Magistrate pointed out.

The Eurasian argued, 'I'm sorry, Sir, but it is difficult to believe how a man can have such thoughts and the spirit of a well-wisher at the same time. Only one of these things can be true and the other false.'

A Muslim nobleman said, 'The Muslims are surprised more about his Islam than you are at his being a well-wisher.'

A Priest asked, 'Well, what do the Muslims think about his religion?'

'Generally they take him to be a Christian,' said the nobleman.

Bursting into laughter the Father said, 'He is not at all a Christian and he has always said it. I meet him so often. I know well that he does not regard the Lord Jesus Christ as God or The Son of God. Like all other Muslims, he regards him as a Prophet only. Of one thing I am sure. Had he been a Christian at heart, he would have openly admitted it. He is not a man to keep his opinions secret. But our whole congregation prays particularly for him. May the Lord grant our prayers!'

'If Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt is not a Christian, as you say, why do you invite him to share your meals?' asked the nobleman.

The Joint Magistrate and the Eurasian Deputy Collector and the other Englishmen burst out laughing at these words.

The Father expounded, 'To be physically clean or unclean does not mean much in our religion. If a man keeps himself clean it is proper and good for the health of his society but this does not make his soul (looking towards the Hindus) or *ātmā* clean in the eyes of the Divine. Man's body is unstable and short-lived. It develops according to a system and will finally perish. In short, the relation between soul and body is only temporary. As the body becomes unclean by filth and dirt, similarly the soul becomes unclean by anger, greed, envy, falsehood, arrogance, tyranny and many other evils. Physical uncleanliness can be easily removed but spiritual uncleanliness cannot be removed without one's being baptised in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. All men are equally unclean in the eyes of God and one in his believing himself clean, shows the uncleanliness of his heart. We share our meals with

Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt because he is a man like us. And, we are prepared to share our meals with anyone and with you more than others if you please.' All of them laughed at these words.

The nobleman said, 'If we are convinced that you abstain from the things which are expressly forbidden in Islam, we have no objection to our sharing meals with you. Anyway, if Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt is not a Christian, and a Muslim he is certainly not, then, what is he?'

The Father said, 'He openly says he is a Muslim and a Muslim certainly he is.'

The nobleman argued, 'If Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt is a Muslim, a believer, then there is no kāfir, in this world.' Pointing to the Kāyasth he said, 'Likewise, our Deputy Sahib too is free to worship idols and claim to be a Christian or a Muslim at the same time.'

The Kāyasth hastily said, 'God forbid, why should I be a Christian, or a Muslim? Ours is the best and the oldest religion which has been in existence for thousands of years. However hard the Muslims tried to destroy Hinduism it was by the work of God that they were themselves destroyed.'

The Joint Maigstrate said, 'Well, if no one wants to take Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt into his fold, it hardly matters for, he too doesn't care for any religion. He is a man of high ideals and there have been many others like him in the world. He only wants prominence.'

The Muslim nobleman, the Kāyasth and the Eurasian, all agreed.

'But I understand that he is really concerned about the reform of the Muslims,' the Father said.

'No, Sir, that is only for show, like an elephant's teeth,' the nobleman responded.

The Father defended Ibn-ul-Vaqt, 'He always feels so sad about the conditions of Muslims whenever he talks in English society about them. He is their well-wisher at heart and he loves his community very much. Whenever he gets an opportunity he tries to work for their benefit.'

The nobleman was not convinced. 'God knows what wisdom

he sees in it! To me it seems that he has left no stone unturned in bringing disgrace to Islam. You may have an idea of his real attitude towards Muslims by the fact that you who are rulers of the land and who have a different religion talk to us politely, but, he just hates to see the Muslims. Leave aside the others, he doesn't even want to see his own relatives. Oh God, what sort of love is this for his community?'

The Joint Magistrate left his seat saying these words: 'My friends, no one has exactly known Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt except me. The meeting is over.'

16 The Pinch

This is what the people thought of Ibn-ul-Vaqt. Among the Indians no one except the few who emulated his lifestyle liked him. Among the English, only a few in the higher ranks appreciated his thoughts and had a regard for him. He knew he had opponents to face. He often felt sad about it. His wife and children had died before the Mutiny. If this absence of family concern was not a cause, it had certainly given him a sense of freedom. But the thought of separation from his brother's family and other relatives pained him. He also felt sad to be cut off from the Indian society. We know for certain that many a time he said to his confidants, 'All the men in the cantonment praise my food but to tell the truth, though I have been taking English food for such a long time, I have never been satisfied. Often, in my dreams I see myself eating Indian food.' His chief personal attendant is also believed to have said, 'Once, Ibn-ul-Vaqt Sahib was suffering from high fever. In a state of delirium he cried out the names of some Indian dishes; not the special ones like pulā'o, *zarda*, *mutanjan* or *biryānī*, but the ordinary ones like the mash of *moong* pulse, half dry *urad* pulse, *qalmī bare*, kabāb and the guava *kachālū*. It shows that he just hungered for spicy Indian dishes. We know that ever since he changed his lifestyle he had

left the city and settled in the cantonment far away. He had so many attendants and servants that the whole enclosure of his bungalow seemed to be a *mohalla* or a quarter of a city in itself. But his personal life was as sad as that of a bachelor's. He was very liberal with his servants and paid them high salaries which hardly three or four others in the cantonment could afford to do. All his servants were highly efficient and always alert. As a matter of fact, it was they who had established his reputation in the English society. But, however intelligent the servants may be, they require the support and supervision of the master. But the English lifestyle was so vexatious an affair that after the court and the meetings, Ibn-ul-Vaqt could hardly find time to look after household affairs. .True that his servants knew the English tastes but Ibn-ul-Vaqt was himself never satisfied. He had always his own ideas on the new dishes. Therefore, he had to devote some time to it. A feast is such a pleasant event that both the host and the guest are pleased. But every feast at Ibn-ul-Vaqt's house proved to be a curse for him. The meals were served only by nine or ten at night but the stormy preparations for it started early in the morning. As far as we remember, after every feast he would fall sick with fatigue. It would have been all right if it was once in six months or so but every month he held at least two or three big dinner parties. Sometimes he himself got fed up with it and said, 'Oh my, what trouble I have brought upon myself.'

Such were the 'tasty fruits' of playing host! And, when he was invited as a guest he felt all the more disturbed. He was shocked if some Englishman did not invite him to his dinner party, and this happened often. He took it as an insult and for several days was embarrassed not only before the English people but also before his own servants. When invited, from the moment he arrived at the house of the host he would worry about such things as what sort of welcome each guest was given, which lady and Sahib took their seats by each other, etc. If he remained alone or found something done better there than at his parties, it became all the more disturbing for him. His obsession to become a member of English society made him so ill at ease that

he might have felt really happy hardly three or four minutes in a whole day, and the rest of the time one would always find him dispirited and sad.

It is worth pondering how a person so engrossed in things mundane should have concerned himself with religiousness? The distinguishing mark of true religiousness is abstinence—as much of it as one can practise. Now, just consider: on the one hand there is abstinence, and on the other are these unnecessary meaningless fretful affairs of the world! We have only mentioned a few such minor instances here, otherwise poor Ibn-ul-Vaqt had to face one great difficulty after another. It was only a determined person like him who went through all these difficulties in good cheer or otherwise. Someone else would have given it up long ago and never have thought of the English society again. As the proverb says, 'it's no joke to eat sugarcanes with elephants'. Even before the Mutiny, Ibn-ul-Vaqt was a fairly well-to-do man. The salaries at the Fort were low but including what he got over and above his salary as rewards, etc. came to be quite a handsome amount. His income was not less than fifty rupees a month. After the Mutiny, a hundred, hundred and a quarter, nay, God preserve him from the evil eye, every month he got altogether five hundred rupees. If he had spent his money well on his food and dress like the usual rich Indian, he would have saved quite a handsome amount out of his income within a few years. But he wished to emulate the English people. It was not yet one full year before he had to borrow money. In the beginning when Jan Nisar clad him in the English dress, he was overjoyed to see the valuable household goods, furnishings, etc. in his bungalow, and his own graceful appearance. He still felt that joy when one day a messenger with a big envelope in his hand came up to the verandah. His attendant took it from him and, as was the practice, he put it on a tray and presented it to the 'new Sahib.' Ibn-ul-Vaqt opened it to find that it was the bill of M/s General Suppliers. The amount? Above five thousand! He nearly lost his senses when he saw the amount but as they say, misfortunes never come singly. He could not do anything now. What cannot be cured must be endured! 'The poor man's anger only hurts

himself', as they say. He had to pay the bill. But how did he manage it? The bag containing one thousand rupees sent by Noble Sahib lay intact with him. Two thousand he managed after much ado on his own. Still he required more than two thousand rupees to settle the account and get rid of it. Fortunately for him, Her Highness Nawab Mashuq Mahal Begum had an account with M/s Gurvalas in Ibn-ul-Vaqt's name. Reluctantly he wrote to them. Since he was a sound party they sent him the money at once. Thus, the whole amount of M/s General Suppliers was paid. A calamity had befallen but it was disposed off well.

Actually, Ibn-ul-Vaqt had been too lavish in his expenditure. If his expenditure had increased only in proportion to the increase in his income, it would not have mattered much. But he cut the coat without considering the cloth. First, in spite of having four houses, he hired a bungalow on a rent of forty rupees a month. Then he had to meet the expenses on phaeton, tandem, brougham, *pālkī* (sedan-cart), that is, four types of horse-carriages and their four horses and on the fifth horse for riding. Then, there was a launderer, a water-carrier, a watchman, a bed-maker, a torch-bearer, a cook, a mate boy, a groom, a grass-cutter, a gardener, a bearer and more than two dozen other menial servants. He had to pay their salaries and for their uniforms. There were other expenses too. Besides these, there were expenses on food of which no one could make an estimate. Even if there were two grand feasts in a month, his whole salary was gone. He might have taken the first three or four salaries on time but after that he had an understanding with the Treasurer. Then, he had not one but two moneylenders always ready to lend him money. Whenever he felt the need for it, he sent his man to them and borrowed as much as he wished. The Treasurer collected his salary right away, and the revenue from the zamīndāri land went to M/s Gurvalas, the moneylenders. In his preoccupation to become an Englishman, the poor fellow did not even know how many loans he had burdened himself with. He was just delighted to entertain such thoughts as: 'The Collector addresses me as "My dear" in his letters and concludes

with the words "Yours sincerely". The Chief Commissioner has gratefully acknowledged my efficiency in his annual report. In one of his judgements, the Judicial Commissioner has said that I have a natural aptitude for law. The Financial Commissioner had requested me to make a draft of a circular. And, I have it with me written in his own hand. My draft was published word for word, with no change in it. One Section in the Law of Evidence was included on my suggestion. The legal member of the Legislative Council had written to me about it in one of his letters. But I fail to understand how he did not mention me in his speech. Maybe, it was a slip on the part of the reporter or else the member himself forgot to mention it. Some gentleman from England has asked me for a copy of my photograph. He has written that his lady wishes it. Oh yes, there's Miss Joseph also who likes the paintings in my drawing room and for hours together she used to play with our dogs. Just now I have received her letter from England. She is going to be married to a rich merchant. The Major has sent for my man to make ice-cream for him. Why not make it here and send him with it? When the Colonel auctions his household goods and other belongings, I'll certainly buy two horses, because two of our horses are always being borrowed for riding by the English Sahibs. I've already spoken to him about his sparrows and his flower pots. The day before, it so happened that the Captain and his memsahib met me as I was walking down the Grand Trunk Road. We had a hearty exchange of greetings. The memsahib had a flower in her hand which she threw towards me. The Captain said, "Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt, I have no flower with me, otherwise I would have presented it to you." I said, "Why, you have a full bouquet." The memsahib thanked me very much for this compliment. Both the husband and wife enjoyed it very much and walked along with me. *The Friends of India** has called me a prominent reformer of Muslims.'

As a man becomes obsessed with something, similarly,

---

*A Calcutta daily later incorporated with *The Statesman*.

Ibn-ul-Vaqt was obsessed about becoming an Englishman. In the beginning he did have thoughts of reform on his mind but after a few days all his zeal was restricted to his seeing that he did not lack in English manners or etiquette in any way. Thus, the poor fellow was ruining himself. Young Muslim boys who had learnt a little English or those who belonged to the well-to-do families followed him and so they also abased themselves. No one knew about Ibn-ul-Vaqt's real condition. They saw that he fraternised with the English people which was considered an honour in those days and which other people could not do. By and by all the people realised that the English lifestyle had hardly benefited anyone. More or less, everyone had suffered because of it. At least no one had gained anything out of it.

It has been mentioned in the beginning of this work that Noble Sahib had been suffering from a constant, mild headache. He was proceeding to England for its treatment when owing to the Mutiny he was held up in Delhi. God be praised, He has His own ways! Without taking any medicine or treatment he did not have this headache during the Mutiny and long after it. It seemed to have completely disappeared. He very much wished to see his relatives but he saw that the whole Empire was shaken and that there was so much work to be done. Even if he were in England he would not have stayed there even for a day under the prevailing conditions. Therefore, he had written to his family that he could not even consider his coming to England until the administration was well established all over the country as earlier. Now as the revolt subsided, the headache resurfaced. Once, he spoke about his going to England to the Chief Commissioner. He said, 'Yes, you may go but I wished the work of investigation to be completed by you.' Therefore, he again put it off. But his headache was becoming more severe day by day. In the summer of 1859 it became so severe that he couldn't get up on days when the heat became intense. His physician had been advising him and now he told him strongly, 'If you stay here in the rainy season, you will certainly kill yourself. I have examined your condition well. No other medicine will do except sea breeze

which is the only cure for your headache.' Noble Sahib wanted to leave only after he had submitted the final report. Almost all the work had been done but as is generally the case, it is the last stages of work which prove most difficult. The rainy season was in the offing and he had not yet started to write the final report. But what resolution of mind and what devotion to his work Noble Sahib had! The doctor constantly advised him against staying on and the headache became worse but he kept at it. He would lie down when it gained in intensity and again start to work after he got some temporary relief. Thus, even in this state he did not say anything about going on leave. The Commissioner on his own informed the Chief Commissioner, upon which orders were issued to him saying, 'Entrust the remaining work to the Collector and you may at once proceed to England with all the papers for making the report. The Chief Commissioner hopes you will be all right when you set sail and you may write the report in England. You will be considered on duty and receive your full salary for the period of your journey and your stay in England.'

17 Noble Sahib's Departure

As soon as the orders were received, the Commissioner had the Collector take charge from Noble Sahib and three days later he saw him off to England. A week before he left, the doctor had advised that Noble Sahib should be allowed no visitors. Thus, during this period Ibn-ul-Vaqt too could not have a detailed meeting with him. It was as though Noble Sahib's departure had left Ibn-ul-Vaqt dumb, because he did not have the opportunity to exchange his thoughts with him. He felt his departure more keenly than anyone else. Owing to his attachment to him, he had not earlier realised that the evil consequences of his change of lifestyle would prove to be more vexatious for him after Noble Sahib's departure.

When Noble Sahib left, the rainy season was in the offing. Owing to intense heat, the air had become quite oppressive and an epidemic had broken out in the city. Some stray cases were also reported in the Cantonment. On the fourth or the fifth day after Noble Sahib's departure, the Commanding Officer issued a general order saying: 'No native except the menial staff of the English are allowed to stay in the Cantonment area and no visitors are allowed from the city. As for the servants of the Englishmen only one from each house may go to the city to do the necessary shopping and he has to come back by seven in the evening. This order will come into effect within one week from the date of its issue.' In the previous year under similar conditions, Noble Sahib had explained to the authorities that though Ibn-ul-Vaqt was a native his lifestyle was the same as that of any Englishman and that his residence was thoroughly cleaned as instructed. Thus, the military authorities did not object to Ibn-ul-Vaqt staying in the Cantonment then.

Now, however much he thought about it, he could not decide on a suitable bungalow. Three or four that he thought were appropriate were already occupied. Even if they had been unoccupied, his furniture could not have been accomodated there. And then, how could the kitchen-garden be shifted to another place? To one who understands Ibn-ul-Vaqt's predicament, this should serve as an exemplary warning because it is similar to the instance of a man who works expediently all his life to better his worldly condition, and in the process develops an attachment to the world but finds all of a sudden that he has to leave this world. And, since he has developed an attachment to this world, he feels a great shock when he has to leave it for good, for he can't take his worldly possessions with him. The things he takes are his deeds. But they may be of no more use to him in the next world than the furniture of one house in another. He does not find a comfortable place in the next world and even if he does, he does not have suitable furniture for it. May God grant us the power that we may not

get enamoured of this transitory world, and prepare ourselves for the next world where we will have to live forever. Amen!

If he had wished, Ibn-ul-Vaqt could have managed the whole affair by flattery and humbly entreating the authorities. But he was arrogant and conceited. He did not consult anyone and simply penned down a letter to the Commanding Officer saying: 'We follow the English way of life and that is why we were exempted last year. This year too we should be exempted as previously.' The Commanding Officer wrote back: 'The Cantonment has become very congested. It is necessary to reduce the congestion in the interest of the soldiers' health. The first step in this regard is not to allow those who do not belong to the army to live there.' This reply closed the doors of negotiation with the authorities. Having no other alternative Ibn-ul-Vaqt had to vacate his bungalow. Thus, for this little inconvenience poor Ibn-ul-Vaqt had to bear the loss of a thousand to twelve hundred rupees. Besides this, he had to bear the insult as well. He couldn't find a bungalow of his choice in time. For the one he got, he had to pay double the rent. His household goods were also damaged in transit. More than anything else, the embarrassment he had to face is beyond one's guess!

18 A Misunderstanding

Actually, Ibn-ul-Vaqt had not realised how much support he had had from Noble Sahib. As soon as Noble Sahib had left, he was surrounded by all kinds of trouble. First of all, Noble Sahib was not inferior to any Collector neither in salary or honour nor in any other respect. Then, everyone, whether English or Indian, firmly believed that the Investigation Department was a temporary one and as soon as it was wound up, Noble Sahib would be made the Commissioner somewhere and most probably of the Delhi Division and that it would be no surprise

if he was appointed the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner because the then Chief Commissioner was very much inclined towards him. That is why people feared Noble Sahib and the whole staff trembled to hear the name of Ibn-ul-Vaqt. Now that there was no one to shield him, all of them turned against him. The moment the orders of handing over the charge were issued, the staff started pulling faces behind his back. First of all, the peons of the Collectorate came to pay their respects. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was busy in his work. The head peon came forward and said, 'Sir, we the peons of the Collectorate have come to pay our respects.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, raising his head, 'What for?'

The head peon said, 'Sir, you have been made the Head of the Revenue Department. May God exalt you to be the Governor!'

Meanwhile, a clerk hurriedly came to get the circular recorded as if he had brought good news. The attitude of the staff was changed, no doubt, but since Ibn-ul-Vaqt was himself sensitive he thought that whatever they did was only to mock him. It was a strange situation. If one did not pay him respect, one was considered presumptuous and if one did, he thought he was being mocked. Four or five days after the Collector had taken charge, the Superintendent went to the Collector's residence to read out the report to him. The Collector said, 'The Chief Commissioner is in a great hurry to see the investigation work complete by the Department. Mr Noble had also asked me to look after it. Be particularly careful about it.'

The reply of the Superintendent was 'As far as this humble servant knows, it still requires one and a half to two years more.'

'One and a half to two years! Mr Noble told me that he would have surely completed the report by the end of the year if he did not have to go to England.'

Said the Superintendent: 'Of course, it would have been so, if the Sahib had stayed here.'

'Mr Noble told me that very few cases remained to be settled

and that Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt was looking after the work, and that it would not take long. The main work is to arrange and record the files. That is why we have not removed even a single clerk. If the staff becomes careless or shows any slackness under the impression that Mr Noble is not there, we are to give them severe punishment. The work must be finished by the end of the year,' said the Collector.

The Superintendent assured him, 'No one in the staff dares to disobey the orders, Sir, and if you please, they can be made to work from morning to evening.'

'Yes, it is the work of the staff to arrange the files.'

'It is your humble servant who recruited the staff to the Investigation Department. When it was instituted, clerks were not easily available. When Noble Sahib ordered me, this your humble servant, arranged for intelligent staff. And, yours humbly fully knows that none of the staff has any work pending with him. Actually, there is negligence in signing the papers. Sir, you will kindly realise that unless the Head of the Department pays attention, the papers cannot be signed.'

'Why did the staff not get them signed in time? It is their fault. Ask for their explanations and present them before me. The staff of the Investigation Department will be punished for this.'

'My Lord, you are the master. When yours humbly learnt of it, he threatened the staff with dire consequences. I would be unfaithful if I do not present the true picture before you. The staff said, "We are in a dilemma, for as the proverb goes 'if I tell, my mother will be beaten, If I don't tell, my father will eat dog's flesh.' " Sir, you will understand it only when you have to work with our Deputy (Ibn-ul-Vaqt) Sahib. He has no fixed time to come or to hold or to adjourn his court. To get the papers signed by him is really a difficult task. It requires great courage even to pay him one's respects.'

'What is this? After all, Indian staff work under English officers as well, isn't it?'

'Work cannot be carried on even for a day if the Sahibs are

always full of wrath like him. If at one time one is displeased, at another time one should also show some kindness.'

'Have you ever gone to see Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt?'

'Sir, I am a poor scribe. What do I matter to him? Perchance, if we come across, I pay him my respects.'

'Have you never gone to his bungalow?'

'Twice or thrice I thought I would but I came to know that he did not like to see Indians except for those who had the same lifestyle as his. If ever he meets Indians, he keeps them waiting for hours together. As for me, there is no question of my going anywhere on the court days. I am free only on Sunday and the whole day is taken by my own household duties.'

'So Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt has given himself too many airs?'

'Sir, he has the expenses of a prince. Apart from the Indians, even the English officers cannot afford to spend so lavishly. Just take our Joint Magistrate Sahib. His salary is four times more than that of *our* Deputy Sahib. Still he cannot afford to have more than two horses. One of them is always in the service of his memsahib. Once when his horse fell ill, he came to the court on foot.'

'Does Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt come from a rich family?'

'His is actually a family of Muslim divines. Personally, he was the General Attorney of a Begum who lived at Kashmere Gate outside the Fort. When the Mutiny broke out she ordered all her belongings and household goods to be shifted to the Fort. And, the person who was asked to look after it was *our* Deputy Sahib. They say that only some wooden furniture reached the Fort. The rest he took to his own place. Meanwhile, Her Highness the Begum passed away. Her household goods and belongings were left where they were.'

'If this is so, it was highly disloyal of him and I cannot think that such a man was sincere in saving Mr Noble's life.'

'Noble Sahib was fortunate that the Government did not lose the battle otherwise the Muslims would not have tolerated any one from any other religion. The English are the new-comers. We Hindus have been living with the Muslims for hundreds of

years. If they could, they would not have left a single Hindu alive.'

'If he had good intentions in saving the life of Mr Noble, then it is no mean compensation that the Government spared him his life and the lives of all the members of his family, and saved their houses and property from being plundered. Even the grant of estate I don't mind. But to appoint such a person to a high Government post is not at all expedient. Anyway, what do the people think?'

'Sir, he could not have carried on a single day as a Deputy Collector without the presence of Noble Sahib. Now, he will have to face difficulties because the staff is displeased and the parties are full of complaints against him.'

'What is the real cause of the people's displeasure?'

'The staff is displeased because of his strictness and indecent language, and because the work is also not done in time. The parties concerned complain of delay in proceedings. For months together they have to wait. Only then and with great difficulty are they relieved.'

'So it seems that Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt is more busy in games and sports.'

'Yes, Sir, this is one thing. People also say that if they ask for any paper, often the reply is that it is with the Deputy Sahib and that the final orders have not yet been given.'

'So, it is not necessary for the Deputy Sahib to find some other means of income to meet his princely expenses. He must have earned a lot, isn't it?'

'If he has, he must have earned so much that he will not need any more money even if his expenditure is four times more.'

'Strange! If this is so, why has no complaint been made against him?'

'As the people feared Noble Sahib no one thought of it. Let us see now. The Deputy Sahib himself looks worried.'

'Well, how do we manage the whole affair now?'

'I, yours humbly, think that the proper thing will be to leave the completion of files to the Deputy Sahib because it is quite a difficult task, and get the remaining cases transferred to your

own court or to some other subordinate officer. There's little work to do in the court of Munshi Ram Sevak Sahib. You yourself know, Sir, how efficient he is. His office-in-charge was telling me that Munshi Sahib decides cases so quickly that they are disposed off without delay. There may be a thousand investigation cases or so at the most. It will only be a three, or at the most, a four-month job for him.'

'All right, write an order just now.'

The Superintendent wrote a short letter then and there, got it hurriedly signed by him and sent it to the Department through a peon. As the Collector signed it, he again said, 'You should keep a close watch on the Investigation Department.'

'Yes, Sir, I will present the weekly report for your kind perusal but if perchance *our* Deputy Sahib meets you, Sir, you may kindly speak to him also so that he may be more careful.'

'Why should it be a spoken arrangement then? It's official work. The orders should be issued in writing.'

Usually, the Collector came to the court around 1.30 p.m. The Superintendent reached there by eleven after having read the report to him. The reception he was to receive reminded one of the reception given to General Outram* in the Bailey Garden of Lucknow. Seeing the Superintendent's bullock cart from afar, all the staff of the criminal courts and of the Collectorate came out anxious to hear of the new developments. Setting his turban like a spinning top on his head, the Superintendent saw that the whole staff had gathered there. He got annoyed and said, 'These lads of today have completely lost their sense. What are you here for? Is it a monkey-dance going on here? You'll see, I'll get each one of you fined.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt had already lost credit when the Collector had taken his charge from him. The transfer of the cases from his court dishonoured him all the more in the eyes of the others. The Collector's order said that all the cases should be transferred to his court without any further proceedings. Ibn-ul-Vaqt wrote

---

*A high English officer at the time of annexation of Oudh.

a note on it saying that the Collector's order should be followed. After that he could not hold his court. He retired to his private chamber and tried to divert his attention by reading the newspaper. But it did not interest him either. When Noble Sahib was there, it was as if he was his own master. He had no idea of what government service meant or what it was to be a subordinate. Now that he faced untoward situations, he just wondered whether the Collector wanted to quarrel with him or was it because he sought an early settlement of cases or whether he had the cases transferred to his court to show his own efficiency to the Investigation Department. Though he pondered over it, he could not think of any cause for the Collector's enmity to him. And, how could he? For, all his reasoning was upside down in this regard. Although, his was the post of a Deputy Collector, he had worked under Noble Sahib ever since his appointment. His job did not require him to have any connection with the officials of the Revenue Department. He had his own job and they had theirs. In short, partly owing to his indifference and partly owing to his lifestyle he kept himself aloof from them. He did not know that fate would take such a turn all of a sudden. In short, he had never tried to develop any contacts with the Collector or the Joint Magistrate or the Assistant or with anyone else. Neither did he think that to keep in contact with the officials of whatever department was in fact a part of official duties. The post of a Deputy Collector or that of Sadr-us-Sudoor, are the only two high posts which Indians can hold. All the eminent Indian Deputy Collectors or Sadr-us-Sudoors we have seen, made it a point to visit (twice or four times a month) not only the Collector, but also the Christian missionary, the physician, the Superintendent of Police, the Inspector of Schools, the Post Master, the Treasury Officer, in short, any other Englishman, high up or low, holding or not holding a post, acquainted or unacquainted to them, at their residence.

Though Ibn-ul-Vaqt could not think of any cause of this enmity, yet one such cause was alienation itself, not only with the Collector but also with all the officers in the district except,

of course, Noble Sahib. And, this alienation was to such an extent that there was not a single friendly being among all the Revenue officials who would say a kindly word to the Collector if he talked about him. How could one be expected to have any regard for an Indian who was snobbish even to the Englishmen? Ibn-ul-Vaqt had never cared to win them over. Thus, all the Collectorate and the Criminal courts were on one side and Ibn-ul-Vaqt alone was on the other. He had not taken away anything from anyone, but only because of his changed lifestyle, all of them had turned against him.

Ibn-ul-Vaqt passed the day alone in his chamber. Many times he inquired from the staff if there was any work for him so that he might hold the court but they replied, 'The Superintendent immediately wants to have the petitions which have been filed and all of us are busy in sorting them out. After these are dispatched and we arrange the files for record in our office we shall sort out those which have the preliminary orders on them but are unsigned. These may be signed together.'

There was another bother which Ibn-ul-Vaqt's self-esteem had created for him. He avoided associating with the Indians. Thus, everyone was reluctant to go to him. He was, therefore, quite unaware of what was going on against him in those days. He noticed, at least, one change as a result of Noble Sahib's departure. The few people who often came to see him now started to avoid him from the very first day after Noble Sahib had left. And now, as the news of the transfer of the cases to the court of the Collector spread, people started to avoid their going even to his court lest the Collector should see them or somehow come to know of it. Ibn-ul-Vaqt thought of going to the Collector to have a personal talk with him or to write a letter to him. But then he said to himself, and rightly so, 'So far I have no cause to complain against him. He has got the cases transferred. Well, no more headache for me! He has not reduced my salary, nor has he confiscated my estate. As for the people, they have been saying all sorts of things against me ever since I changed my lifestyle. Leave them to it. I have my personal honour, as ever, with me.'

19 The Discord

A Hindi proverb says: 'A sore, and a person whom one wishes to avoid, are always in the way.' While reading out the report, the Superintendent had already poisoned the ears of the Collector against Ibn-ul-Vaqt. Unfortunately, as if to confirm the truth of this proverb, Ibn-ul-Vaqt came across the Collector that very evening. About half past five he left the courts and rode towards Meerut. The sun was on his back and a cold easterly wind was blowing against him. He had ridden one and a half *kos* (two to three miles) ahead of Shahadra and the sun was now low in the sky as it set. He did not wish to return because it was going to be a clear moonlit night but the river could only be crossed on a ferry. With the thought that the horse might not step into the pit-like ferry in darkness he had to make his way back. When he approached the mosque, Zīnat-ul-Masājid, people were coming out of it after having said their sunset prayers. When he reached the Daryaganj crossing, he saw that an Englishman was walking alone in the middle of the road towards the windmills. When there was a distance of no more than twenty or twenty-five steps the Englishman moved to one side on hearing the horse's hooves. When Ibn-ul-Vaqt passed him, he recognised him as the Collector. He reined in his horse and said, 'Good evening, Mr Sharp. I had no idea that I would see you here on the road at this hour. If you please, my horse is at your disposal.'

The Collector said, 'No, thanks, I wish to go on foot.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt then said, 'Please forgive me for my not dismounting when you are on foot and I happen to be on a horse. This horse is so swift that if I get down, it'll go out of control. You may have heard about it. It's the same "Arrow" that won laurels at the Meerut race. I paid a hundred sovereigns for it.'

The Collector remarked, 'Perhaps, no one has a horse of such a high price in the Cantonment.'

'I should think not. I had gone a little too far across the river. I enjoy taking this course on my evening rides. It is pleasantly cool because of the river nearby. There is also plenty of greenery. I believe you must have also gone far across the river to enjoy the sights.'

The Collector said, 'I wish to spend time in my own district so that I will get to know it better. So I get very little time to move about.'

'If you don't mind I may inform you that I have no work these days,' Ibn-ul-Vaqt said directly.

Ibn-ul-Vaqt waited for the reply but when the Collector said nothing he added, 'The cases are almost complete. I have processed them all.'

Then the Collector said, 'Why speak of the dry leaves and thorns when the gracious green was all yours?'

However hard Ibn-ul-Vaqt tried to make the Collector explain his words he would not open up further. His words showed his anger and misunderstanding. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was not a man to put off a matter like that but it was really an awkward situation. The Collector was on foot and he was on a horse. He could not get down. He could neither go ahead nor retreat, for it would be bad manners, nor could he fall back, for it would be an insult. He was helpless. His position was just as the proverb says: 'Neither leave nor stay there!' At last with these words he took his leave: 'I beg your leave. A friend of mine is waiting for me at the Fort.'

Several times in the night and in the morning until he left for the courts, Ibn-ul-Vaqt pondered over the Collector's words. At last he decided that he should not utter a word about it until he himself was formally provoked, otherwise it would be assumed that the fault was his as the proverb says: 'The thief has a straw in his beard.'* Meanwhile, the Collector had kept his

---

*In a caravanserai a traveller lost his bag of money. He invited his fellow-travellers to have their dinner with him. When all of them assembled he said, 'Gentlemen, somebody has stolen my bag of money but thank God, I have found out the thief. He is here itself and has a straw in his beard.' On these words, the person who had stolen the bag, tried to brush his beard with his fingers. Thus, he was detected. A guilty man is always conscious of his guilt.

ammunition ready for him. Next morning, as Ibn-ul-Vaqt reached the courts, he found the Collector's order on his table which said:

> 1. Last evening I, the undersigned, was going down the Daryaganj Road. Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt, the Deputy, riding on his horse came up to me from behind and addressed me. The Deputy is hereby asked to give an explanation for this imprudence.
>
> 2. The Deputy went across the river to District Meerut without taking permission or informing the undersigned. It appears from what he said that he often goes there. He is asked to explain his conduct.
>
> 3. The Deputy should calculate the toll tax for each time he has gone across the river Jamuna and deposit the same as the undersigned does not believe that he has ever paid the tax.

The whole staff was excited and anxious to see how Ibn-ul-Vaqt, *the Deputy Sahib*, would react to this. Some of them said, 'He won't stay here any more. He may not resign but may go on leave and rest at his place or go to Noble Sahib in England or else he may get himself transferred.' Some others said that since he was acquainted with many Englishmen he might get it settled through any one of them. Someone said, 'If he is gentle enough, he will never think of adopting the English lifestyle. Of what use have been his coat and pants? Alas, he lost his faith and ruined his career too.'

There were as many opinions as there were men. As for Ibn-ul-Vaqt, he was satisfied on one count at least. He now knew what was on the Collector's mind. He also understood now the cause of the cases being transferred. He also found out the reason for his caustic words at the Daryaganj Road. He at once wrote a letter to him saying: 'Before I make a final reply to your kind order, and I hope you will kindly not force me to make it, I humbly request you to let me make myself present before you so that I may personally remove all your doubts. There seems to be a misunderstanding about me and it is not strange if the feeling of alienness leads one to commit a mistake. I firmly believe, when you know all the facts, all your doubts

against me will be removed and you will have a change of heart towards me. My misfortune is that people have a feeling of animosity towards me simply because of my English lifestyle, and those who are jealous of me are not few in number. As such, I have scant hope that the people will recommend me kindly to you. I do not seek any favours. What I want is justice. If in all fairness, I don't deserve your kindness, it will be much better if I relinquish the work rather than face the insult which the displeasure of a senior brings to a subordinate. You may yourself kindly realise that apart from the mental agony which I have been put to, it is not at all useful for the Government if I continue to work in these conditions.'

The Collector was so annoyed with Ibn-ul-Vaqt that he hatefully wrote down a note in pencil on the envelope itself saying: 'I do not like any native clad in English dress at my residence.' Even then Ibn-ul-Vaqt made no reply to the order for another two days. On the third day he received a reminder. It was a harsh one telling him that due steps would be taken against him if he made no reply before adjourning the court. So he had to reply. The objections raised by the Collector might have been of significant worth to him or to his Superintendent, but Ibn-ul-Vaqt made such a crushing reply that they must have been ashamed of themselves. He wrote:

1. The Collector deserves respect because of his official status which means that all the subordinates must obey his legitimate orders. The meeting of which the Collector complains of has nothing to do with his official status. The Collector met me unexpectedly at the Daryaganj crossing after sunset and I did not recognise him until I reached him. On recognising him I thought it against all manners to pass him by without greeting him. After greeting him I felt it was necessary to exchange polite words with him to remove the barriers of being strangers to each other. I own my fault and feel sorry and beg his pardon that I did it.
2. District Meerut is adjacent to the city of Delhi. I have often gone for a ride across the river. I have not seen any prohibiting order; besides it is not in the interest of the Government to keep its officials under surveillance. If there is really some such restriction

in any order, it is not practicable and on account of its being of no use, it deserves cancellation.

3. Perhaps, the Collector Sahib forgets that administration of Free Fund, that is, revenue from the river relates to the Criminal Court otherwise the letter would not have been issued from the Collector's Court. Apart from this, as the ferry is a lease-hold place, it is the lessee's right to demand the tax.

As is generally known, man seldom keeps a steady nerve in anger. Seeing this reply the Collector wanted to report it at once to his seniors. But the Superintendent said, 'Why should you report it, Sir? This slight show of your displeasure is enough. Just see the condition of the Deputy Sahib. Not even a process-server of the court pays him any respect. No one even goes to his court. To a person who has ruled with such dignity this disrespect is not a small matter. The Deputy Sahib may shortly submit his letter of resignation or an application for leave. Kindly wait, Sir, and report it if you must, but let it be strongly worded so that it may not be a wasted effort. The Deputy Sahib is firmly established. By praising him greatly before the higher authorities, Noble Sahib has impressed his efficiency and honesty on their minds. The files are being recorded. I, yours humbly, will give a hint to the staff to find out the irregularities. Meanwhile, it will not be a surprise if some cases are also filed against the Deputy Sahib.'

The words of the Superintendent quelled the Collector's anger and he deferred the writing of the report although the people believed that the report had been made. The Superintendent tried hard to get some cases filed against Ibn-ul-Vaqt but how truly it has been said:

Clean thy heart, and fear no one;
It's unclean cloth
That washermen beat on stone!

It was as though everyone in the court had become an enemy of Ibn-ul-Vaqt's. But since his record was clean, no one dared openly challenge him and thus, our brave man came to the courts with the same dignity.

People avoided meeting him for fear of the Collector, and on his part he did not care for anyone and looked down upon them. He felt neither regret nor apprehension, sorrow or fear over the Collector's displeasure. He was deprived of all his work. Therefore, he brought a bundle of newspapers with him and leisurely perused them. In spite of this, the Collector's provocation continued. Seeing the way the wind blew, his own staff had become so wilful that apart from their disobeying his orders and neglecting their work they did not even bother to be punctual. Hardly a day passed without an enjoining letter from the Collector in no polite language. It was rather such harsh and uncivilised language that even a strict chief of police would not have used it to address an ordinary watchman. If Ibn-ul-Vaqt pressed his staff to work, it was to no effect. He even fined a few of them but they went straight to the court of the Collector and had it cancelled. Actually, they wanted to harass him as much as possible and went to the extent of even getting his court room changed. He had used a grand comfortable room but now he was given a room which had no sunshade nor any protection against the rains. And then, the staff was always there like a stone on his chest to cause him pain the whole day. Meanwhile, some anonymous letters which contained complaints against him were also sent. They gave details of his strictness and injustice and hinted at his taking bribes. These letters served as a pretext for the Collector to take action against him. Announcements to the beat of drums, and posters displayed at many places all over the city said: 'Whoever has any complaint against Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt the Deputy Collector, should without hesitation present himself in the court of the Collector.' Along with it the staff also thoroughly checked and re-checked the files.

For over two months Ibn-ul-Vaqt was surrounded by all sorts of troubles. There was even talk of his dismissal, transfer or suspension or his case being sent to a criminal court. But then it would subside by itself after a few days. But soon, people on their own started to think differently and said to one another, 'The Collector took away his work, got him to vacate his room, wrote a few rude words and that's all. What more could he do?

But bravo to the Deputy Sahib! He never looked disturbed. Why not, after all, one should have that dignity first, if one is to govern. He has fully justified his lifestyle, coat, pants and all. Earlier, he used to ride occasionally in a one-horse carriage but ever since his first encounter with the Collector, he always used a two-horse carriage. The Collector must have reported this, as characteristic of all Englishmen whose actions are marked by hurry and haste. But since it has not yet come to light, it seems the authorities at the centre have taken no notice of it. Oh yes, after all, Noble Sahib is a great contact. The subordinate district officers may not have appreciated his well-intentioned activities for the Government during the days of the Mutiny but they are recorded favourably with the Government. Who can undo them? The Collector unnecessarily invited trouble for himself. Did he think he was dealing with some timid *lala* (Hindu) Deputy Collector who would take it lying down and apologise with tears in eyes out of fear on just an angry look? It will not be a surprise if the Collector is himself asked to give an explanation. And, who knows if an explanation has been already called from him?'

20 Ibn-ul-Vaqt's Financial Anxieties

From the start Ibn-ul-Vaqt was burdened with financial difficulties. The discord with the Collector also cost him several thousand rupees. The very next day, or perhaps on the same day, as the Collector's displeasure became known to all, the Treasurer sent word that it would be better for him to please settle the accounts, lest the Collector should come to know of it and penalise him instead of Ibn-ul-Vaqt for, he had almost the same status as that of the Collector. There was nothing much to worry if payment to the Treasurer was the only problem. Usually, if he needed more money at the time of disbursement of salaries Ibn-ul-Vaqt just sent for it from the Treasurer. He thought thus that the amount payable to the Treasurer would not be more

than a thousand, or twelve hundred rupees at the most. But the Treasurer's demand reminded him also of the loan he had to repay M/s Gurvalas, the moneylenders. He said to himself, 'It would be very difficult indeed, if the Gurvalas also demanded their money back. Their amount will be about ten thousand. How will I manage that at present? I can't be sure of my job. I do not know if I will be able to complete even this month. Even if I continue in the job, who will give me a loan against my salary in such uncertain conditions? The household goods are precious and quite costly indeed, but there is a great difference between buying a thing and putting it on sale. And, how will I sell them? Leave aside my finding a good buyer, even if I wish to auction them no one would even come to see the things for fear of the Collector. No doubt, the zamīndārī estate can be of much help. Forests, gardens, trees and besides these there are many other items which may be readily cashed. I think I will easily get ten thousand rupees for the forest and greenery. But then it is a reward conferred by the Government which I have got under the Government's seal. To dispose of even the smallest portion of it will be unlawful, ungracious, improper and it will bring me a bad name. The best arrangement would be to dispose of the properties of the city, if possible. These are very good indeed. Built in the times of Emperor Shahjahan (1627–58) they have arched roofs, thick walls and raised platforms. They are spacious, grand, strong and durable. If there is a buyer who really needs it, then only one of these properties, the twelve-door *bārādarī* of Khas Bazar will be sufficient to pay off the loan of the Gurvalas. Ten thousand must have been spent on lime and water alone in building it. When the ventilator-lattices of the basement were broken, it took five stone-cutters to work for three months to repair them and each lattice cost thirty rupees. But the problem is that this house is suitable for Muslims only and I do not know anyone rich enough among them. Brother Hujjat-ul-Islam is shortly to retire and become a pensioner. Before he went on the Haj pilgrimage he had said that it would be difficult for him to stay in his ancestral house. He had also asked me to keep him in mind if some house went on sale. It

will be the best thing if he buys it. But then how can he be expected to have ten thousand rupees? And even if he has, it is not easy to invest such an amount in a house. And then if I mention it to him, God knows how long it will take for him to settle it? Will he pay all at once or in instalments?'

After pondering over it, he sent a letter to Maulvi Hujjat-ul-Islam explicitly telling him that perhaps he would require the money at once as he could not afford a delay. Then he thought he should also ask M/s Gurvalas too. He sent his servant to them and asked for a copy of the statement of accounts. As his servant delivered Ibn-ul-Vaqt's message, the Gurvalas at once perceived the situation and said to him, 'All right, our agent will present himself with the copy.' The next day Lala Tikori Mal himself went to him. After the exchange of formalities he said, 'Sir, kindly let us know how we are at fault that you have asked for a copy of the statement of accounts? We never expected this, Sir. You are treating us as if we are not your own but strangers, or rather, enemies. By the grace of God and with your kindness, we also have a name and goodwill. Everyone has ups and downs in this world. If we have any greed, our reputation will come to be of little worth. Deputy Sahib, Sir, greediness does not gather wealth. Whatever God has given us is entirely the fruit of the goodwill of our ancestors. I submit a letter of release here and now instead of the copy of the statement. Payments may be made when, by the grace of God, it is convenient for you but for now at least we cannot take anything from you. Kindly do not worry about the interest, etc. We have already earned a lot from the Fort because of you. No, we are not shameless and we can never be ungrateful.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'But the Treasurer ...'

Tikori Mal then explained, 'I know you have to pay some money to the Treasurer. I have also learnt that he had asked you for it or that he was going to do so. But, Sir, God has made you an officer and you know everyone has to do his duty. The Treasurer is just an employee and secondly, whatever he has to give or take is entirely Government's money. He cannot wait. Just tell us the amount, please, the Treasurer's accounts will also be settled.'

'No, his is not such a big amount. It can be easily arranged—I asked for a copy of the statement mainly because a government employee is not supposed to take a loan in his own jurisdiction. In the beginning I did not know of this restriction. And, when I learnt of it I did not bother about it.'

'You unnecessarily worry about it, Sir. If there is any such restriction, no one follows it. The Collector may do whatever he likes but upon my word, see if he does anything about it. Do you think he is himself free from loans? I can't say anything about the Englishmen in the army but among the civilians, there will hardly be anyone who has a job in Delhi and whose name is not there in the account books of *your* firm. Then you joined service only after the Mutiny. We have had your family accounts for generations. You will yourself kindly see if there is anyone else other than you who has a job in his own birthplace. The Government has a special consideration for you. If the Collector Sahib raises this issue, nothing will come out of it. This much I assure you.'

21 Hujjat-ul-Islam

Hujjat-ul-Islam had gone on the Haj pilgrimage before the Mutiny of 1857. He heard about it while he was still in Arabia. It was twenty days or so after Delhi had been subjugated by the English that he reached Bombay and came to know the details. He was still on leave and he could easily stay for a month or so in Delhi if he wished, before he went back to his office. But he learnt that some parts of Delhi were still under disturbance and the Muslims of Delhi were being treated violently. He, therefore, thought it better to go by sea to Calcutta via Madras and from there to his own district. In short, the conditions of Ibn-ul-Vaqt had taken a different turn while Hujjat-ul-Islam was away. They had only maintained an irregular correspondence between them. Sometimes they exchanged letters in quick succession and sometimes there was none for months and months together.

Ibn-ul-Vaqt had sent hearty congratulations on Hujjat-ul-Islam's return from the pilgrimage and Hujjat-ul-Islam likewise had sent him his felicitations on his getting the reward for wishing the Government well and on his appointment to a high post. But Ibn-ul-Vaqt did not of course, write about the change in his lifestyle. Hujjat-ul-Islam also played ignorant about it. Ibn-ul-Vaqt's paternal aunt had several times written to her son-in-law, Hujjat-ul-Islam, that 'people's taunts and reproachful remarks have made life miserable for us. It has become pretty difficult for us to live in this locality any more. Please make it convenient to come over here for a few days and help us settle somewhere else.' But Hujjat-ul-Islam had put it off every time on one pretext or the other. But then, blood is blood. The people, one and all, considered the change in Ibn-ul-Vaqt's lifestyle as a change of his religion and were displeased with him but now when it became known that the Collector was intent on harassing him, they rejoiced at his distress but his close relatives were very worried and came to his aunt because she was the eldest in the family. Apart from relations, everybody had gained, more or less, from Ibn-ul-Vaqt's being a well-wisher of the Government. Actually, Muslims had such a hard time after the Mutiny that the sinful and the innocent, all alike feared the wrath of God. Thousands of them who had nothing to do with the revolt were falsely implicated in it. The relatives of Ibn-ul-Vaqt were the only exceptions. If anyone of them just mentioned his name, at least no informer would dare report him. Ibn-ul-Vaqt was rough and rude in his behaviour but the people gained confidence from him. Someone has rightly said that grudges are forgotten in times of adversity. No one now bothered to think whether Ibn-ul-Vaqt had renounced Islam or shared his meals with Englishmen, or that he had left his community and kinsfolk and his home to join the English society, or that he had brought a bad name to his ancestors and despoiled his family honour. They had forgotten all their grudges and complaints against him and were keen to see him relieved from that distressful situation. His aunt cried as if one cries over a dead man. But as the proverb goes, 'the priest sees no farther

than the mosque', all of them could only vow and pray and recite the name of God to seek His help and to imprecate the Collector.*

When all other plans failed and her letters to her son-in-law Hujjat-ul-Islam received no response, Ibn-ul-Vaqt's aunt sent a letter to her daughter telling her, 'two full months have passed and it is now the third month that the highest English officer of Delhi has been unnecessarily and most unfairly harassing your cousin Ibn-ul-Vaqt. You know there is none else able enough in the whole family who may help him in this distress. I am tired of writing to your husband as he does not respond. For God's sake, make him understand. Bring him here with you. But be quick. Time will pass but it will leave a slur on us if we don't help him now. Relationships apart, just think, if, God forbid, something adverse happens to him, who will let us live in peace in Delhi? He is our only hope. May God grant him life and show him the right path! May he prosper ever more! All the relatives come to wish him and wonder that your husband has not come. I tell them that he is after all in service but he may arrive any time. Anyway, do come here even if you have to leave your work, and come soon. Take these few words seriously and act accordingly.'

Now that she sent this letter and asked Hujjat-ul-Islam through her daughter to come over to Delhi, and Ibn-ul-Vaqt too wrote to him about his immediate need to sell his twelve-door bāradarī house, Hujjat-ul-Islam realised that Ibn-ul-Vaqt

---

*Here, the writer mentions the following verses from the Qur'an, devotional exercises and prayers:

Khatm-e-Khwājagān: Recitation of Surahs No. 1 and 94 of the Qur'an, and citation of ten specified names of God with *durūd* (praise of Muhammad) at the beginning and end; 'There is no God but Thou: Glory to Thee: I was indeed wrong!' (The Qur'an: 21:87); 'who listens to the (soul) distressed when it calls on Him, and who relieves its suffering' (The Qur'an: 27:62); 'It is not ye who slew them; it was Allah: When thou threwest (a handful of dust), it was not thy act, but Allah's:' (The Qur'an: 8:17); 'O Allah, we leave the neck of our enemies for Thy disposal and we seek shelter against their evil!'; *Hizb-ul-Bahr; Dalā'il-ul-Khairāt; Yā Sīn* (The Qur'an: S.36); *Salāt-ul-Hājāt; A'mal-e-Hasr-ul-Lisān.*

was really finding it difficult to manage the whole affair. He now realised that any further delay was not good. He at once wrote to him, 'Please arrange for my stay in your bungalow and rest assured that I will be there!' In the meantime, Jan Nisar also came back after he had accompanied Noble Sahib to Bombay and he had also spent ten days at his home with the Sahib's permission. On reaching Delhi he learnt what had happened within those few days. He at once went to Ibn-ul-Vaqt and said, 'What a mistake you have made, Sir! If the Sahib had known this, he wouldn't have boarded the ship.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'Do you think it would have been proper for me to trouble him when he was ill and about to go on a difficult journey? The Collector is certainly harassing me but those who do not know the facts will hold me responsible for it. That is why I do not even mention this to anyone.'

Jan Nisar said, 'Sir, it was as if the Sahib's country had been calling him, for by the time he reached Bombay he was quite healthy and revived.'

After hearing the details of how he had to vacate the bungalow and how the people avoided him following the discord between the Collector and him, he said, 'Sir, from the very beginning I have been noticing the changing attitude of the people. God knows what sort of influence Noble Sahib has, or rather it was not just influence but a force, that no one dared utter a word against you. I have spent my whole life among Englishmen. Our Noble Sahib is like an angel and it is really difficult to find one like him. Delhi is a big cantonment but there may be hardly three or four fine Englishmen like him and no more. Otherwise, Sir, when do these people ever trust an Indian? I have myself heard Noble Sahib say that it is seldom that Englishmen of noble families come here. Some of them come from families of bakers, others from cobblers, some from tailors, some from butchers and some from barbers. So, how can they undo their low birth? It is a matter of regret that you have spent thousands of rupees on these people by your adopting the English lifestyle, yet they turn their eyes like a parrot in your time of need. It is just as the proverb says, "to feed a donkey will take you neither to hell nor

to heaven". As for the Collector, it is well known that he is a credulous man. He was already maliciously inclined towards you. What I feel is that someone from our own brethren has found an opportunity to poison his ears against you. Now that I have come, I shall find out who it is. But tell me please, how do you propose to counteract it?'

'I had no plans and what can I do? At first I tried to see the Collector but he refused to see me. I let it go.'

'You should have asked someone to mediate, Sir.'

'Do you mean that I should go and flatter someone to plead with the Collector to forgive me for my mistake? No, I can't do that. It is the arbitrariness of the Collector. It is he who should apologise and not me.'

'Then, it would have been better for you, Sir, to take leave and take rest at your place.'

'How foolish it is to say such things! If I had applied for leave in that situation, people would have thought there was really something wrong on my part. This would have provided another opportunity to my enemies. The Collector too would have used this and certainly opposed it and never let it be sanctioned. Now listen, brother Hujjat-ul-Islam is coming here and shall stay with me. Tell me how shall we arrange for him? There is no room for him in the bungalow.'

'That is really good news. God willing, every thing will be all right now. As far as his accommodation is concerned, let me say that he is a religious man. One room will be sufficient for him. To arrange it is not that difficult. I shall do it properly for him.'

'I do not think I shall be able to spare even one room for him. This bungalow has eight rooms but as you know, there were originally only six. I had two of them partitioned and made windows therein. There was no dressing room which I had made after the bathroom was partitioned. But both the parts are too small. I do not know how this bungalow was designed. Even one person cannot live comfortably in it. There was no suitable place for study. Therefore, the room on the north side had to be converted into a library and a portion thereof was made the reading room. In short, at present there is one bathroom and

next to it is the dressing room, adjacent to it is the bedroom and then the reading room adjoining the library. Adjacent to the library is the billiards room. The piano is also placed there in the south corner. It is out of place there, but what can be done? And then, there is no smoking room. The household goods and other things are lying in the verandah and some of them are dumped in the servant quarters. You cannot think of decorating the house as there is no space even to keep the necessary things in order.

'What a bad practice this is in India! He never even asked me whether he could stay. Bluntly he writes, "I'll stay with you". I have been wondering what to do since I received his letter.'

'Why do you worry so much? Let him come, Sir, and leave it to himself. Our Noble Sahib's bungalow is vacant though it is a bit far away from here.'

22 Hujjat-ul-Islam Arrives

We do not remember the date but what we do recall is that the rains were late in coming when the Muslims decided that before they said the Friday prayers at the Eidgah, they would say the *Istisqā'*, public prayers for rains. The Eidgah was thus cleaned on Thursday, awnings had been raised and the prayer carpets spread when all of a sudden there was a heavy downpour. Therefore, the whole plan was given up and only the Friday prayers were held at the Jama Masjid as usual. People met Hujjat-ul-Islam after the prayers and asked him, 'When did you come, Sir?'

Hujjat-ul-Islam said, 'Yesterday, between the afternoon and sunset prayers.' On these words the people said, 'It is because of your gracious arrival that God has shown mercy on his creatures.'

When the four-wheeled dāk carriage was driven into the enclosure of Ibn-ul-Vaqt's bungalow, he was not there, for he had gone on his evening ride. As the servants knew about his coming all of them paid him their respects as the carriage arrived.

The steward went up to him and said, 'Our master has gone on his evening ride. For some days he had been going towards the riverside, today he may have gone somewhere else.'

After getting down from the carriage, Hujjat-ul-Islam looked around the bungalow and saw it inside out. His attendant followed him holding the ewer for ablution. At last Hujjat-ul-Islam said to him, 'Well, there is no place to perform the ablution here. Put the ewer in the verandah.' He asked the steward, 'Is there any mosque close by?'

Looking around, the steward said, 'I don't think there's one!'

Hujjat-ul-Islam asked, 'How many of you are Muslims?'

The Steward started to count on his fingers to himself, 'Tailor one, water-carrier two, watchman three, two mate boys under the cook, how many is that? Yes, five; two grooms, two peons and one—me.' He said aloud, 'Ten.'

'God preserve you from the evil eye! Where do you and your master say the prayers?' asked Hujjat-ul-Islam.

The steward felt embarrassed at this and lowered his head. After performing his ablutions, Hujjat-ul-Islam asked the attendant whether he had performed the ablutions too.

'Yes Sir, I have.'

'Good. Ask Nek Mard (the other attendant) to come here and also to bring with him the two prayer carpets from the carriage. There seems to be no arrangement for saying the prayers here. There are pictures and pictures in all the rooms. This verandah will be the right place.'

With these words Hujjat-ul-Islam himself gave the call to prayer. No one was familiar with this call there. The horses in the stable raised their ears and the dogs barked. Thus, with a feeling of disgust Hujjat-ul-Islam said his prayers with his two attendants as in a congregation. After saying the prayers he asked the steward, 'When does your master come back?'

'Usually before the sunset.'

'What does he do then? Let me know his whole routine.'

'Earlier, one or two English Sahibs used to accompany him here and two or three others came directly to the bungalow. But these days the number of the Sahibs who visit him has grown

much less and our Sahib too doesn't go anywhere. He takes his meal at ten and till then he reads a book or the newspapers. After the meal he plays billiards. Then, taking a cup of tea he retires to his bedroom. He gets up at eight in the morning, takes his bath, changes his dress, and after his morning meal he leaves for the courts.'

'Ah, he gets up at eight in the morning! It means he does not go to bed before twelve at night,' Hujjat remarked.

'I do not know much about what happens these days. But when the English Sahibs used to come here often, there used to be a huge crowd till 2 a.m.'

'What type of meals are prepared here? And who cooks them?'

'It is the English type of food and one Kishtiya from Madras is the cook.'

'What is his caste?'

'He eats the leavings of all—the Hindus, the Muslims and the Englishmen. Ask him and he says he is an Urva. God knows who the Urvas are. But all the people praise his preparations. He is also called to the Commissioner's house whenever there is a big dinner party.'

For more than an hour Hujjat-ul-Islam talked to the steward. His attendant asked him if he wished to take out the baggage from the carriage but he told him to wait. As the time for the prayers after sunset drew near, the attendant said, 'Sir, the coachman is asking us to make haste.'

'Tell him to wait. Let us say the prayers. Deputy Sahib is also about to come. We shall leave after we meet him. Set the horses free. Feed them some grass and don't ask me again.'

When the afternoon prayers were said, the dogs had only become alert and scraped the ground with their paws on hearing *azān* (the prayer-call). This time besides the prayer-call, the prayers too were said in a loud voice. Secondly, the dogs had been set free before sunset as usual. The steward and the dog-keeper and all the others tried to restrain and frighten them away but they were the favourites of their master, and none of them bothered about the servants, for they surrounded Hujjat-ul-Islam and his men. Hujjat-ul-Islam well knew how to say the

prayers in changed circumstances but here it was a strange situation. Only *Allāh o Akbar* (Allah is Great), he said aloud for if he had uttered a word more, the dogs would have caught him by his throat. In the meantime, Ibn-ul-Vaqt arrived. Hearing the sound of the hooves, the dogs ran towards him and thus Hujjat-ul-Islam could finish his prayer-call and prayers in a loud voice. The two cousins met after the prayers. Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'You have seen the bungalow. Now tell us please, which portion will be most comfortable for you so that your baggage may be kept there. The whole bungalow is at your disposal. I'm sorry it has a few rooms and these too are quite small but then, I may shift to Noble Sahib's bungalow.'

23 On Religion

'When I made up my and mind to come to Delhi, I had resolved that I would stay with you. I had written to you about it. It won't be proper if you shift to some other place.' Hujjat-ul-Islam was saying.

Ibn-ul-Vaqt replied, 'But to live in discomfort will be more unpleasant. I am myself staying here because I had no choice. It seems this bungalow was not built for residential purposes but to be used as an office or a godown. From the beginning of my service I lived in the Cantonment. There, I had quite a large bungalow, so large that sometimes four English Sahibs would comfortably stay at a time as my guests. I had also made some alterations to it as per my requirements and had accordingly furnished all the rooms. I took a lot of pains in laying a beautiful garden. As the air had become oppressive because of the excessive heat, the Commanding Officer became apprehensive and asked all the people who were not army officers to immediately vacate. I tried my best but could not get a bungalow of my choice. I had to take this one and here too I have added two rooms. Even then there is not enough space. All my baggage has been lying

in the verandah and getting spoiled. Though the location of this bungalow is not bad, yet I fear my health will suffer because it is too small for me.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam said, 'Yes, how true, man is a strange being. If he has plans of expansion there will be no place to accomodate even two kings in the whole world. If he is unassuming, even ten dervishes can sleep on one rug. Well, one room will be quite enough for me. In my house too I use only little space. My house is quite large, you know, but only one hall and one small room are for my personal use; and both of them together may be as big as this large room of yours. No, they are smaller than this, I think. Even that too is not used exclusively by me in the sense that in winter I seldom step into the hall. I have my bed in the small room and there is enough space by its side for five or six persons to sit comfortably. Seven or eight may also be accomodated if they sit close together. It is there that I meet my visitors. I also study, take my meals and say my prayers in that room. In short, that small room is sufficient for me. I think that ultimately from this vast earth I will get only a little space; for my grave and only for some time too. Where, I do not know. About that too I am not sure. So, I recall the saying of Luqman the wise, "even this much is more than enough for one who is destined to die." '

'I wonder how you maintain your health in such conditions!' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'I maintain it in the same way as millions of people do, and as you did two or three years ago!'

'What maintain! It has been hardly two months since hundreds of men died of cholera in the city. It had broken out even here. In the beginning a few people died in the streets and some in the servant quarters of the English Sahibs. Many showed the symptoms but there were only two casualties. Well, no wonder it broke out there, for these people never bother about cleanliness however much you warn them. But there were three Englishmen staying in the barrack master's bungalow. Within four hours all of them showed the symptoms one after the other. They were saved except for one engineer. And, there was a great

din over it in the Cantonment and the Commanding Officer asked for an explanation from the doctor. However much the doctor investigated he could find no clue as to how it had crept in there. The bungalow is situated on a high hill. There was no trace of the disease in the neighbourhood nor in the servant quarters of the bungalow. There is no pond, no gutter, no trenches, no farming, no rubbish, no graveyard in the vicinity or even within one hundred and fifty feet around the bungalow. There is an open ground all around which is always kept clean. At last, it was found that the milkman who supplied milk for tea took his buffaloes to a pond in village Dukhyari where this disease was rampant.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam could not help himself laughing at this and said, 'Well, the doctor did a really wonderful job to discover the cause: the pond was contaminated, from the pond it passed to the buffaloes, from the buffaloes to their milk, from the milk to tea and from tea to the English Sahibs. But can one ask the doctor where it came from in the village?'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'Well, the living conditions of Indians in general and of the villagers and the poor in particular are such that everywhere you may find the germinating seeds of cholera. As summer sets in, they grow. I have been to village Dukhyari so many times on my rides. There are about two hundred houses in it and it has been inhabitated since the last ten years. What I gathered was that anyone in need of a house digs the ground anywhere he likes and builds himself a house. That is why you find pits around every house in which they dump everything—cowdung, rubbish and all sorts of rotting things. Every pit thus becomes a dumping ground. It becomes waterlogged with the rain and the whole year it stinks. These are their living conditions. Then, there is a pond nearby where all the men and women take their baths and the cattle too drink water from it. In the pond they sow the water-chestnuts. On one side you will find heaps of jute which lie all along and the washermen washing the dirty linen'.

'Is this the pond, then, which is the cause of the engineer's death?' asked Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'No sir, this is another pond on the fringe of the village and it is a bit cleaner than the village one.'

'The conditions of village Dukhyari as you have described them are truly so. But then, the conditions of all the other villages are much worse. But thank God, only a few of those who were infected with cholera died while the others survived. To be more exact, only some of them were infected and of them too, only a few died. Even so, if village Dukhyari provided the first cause in the chain of causes of four Englishmen catching the disease and of the death of one engineer, there must be some reason why some people remained safe and why some of the infected ones were cured of it. It means that if there is a cause of disease and death, there must also be a cause of health and survival.'

'I am inclined to think that people have different tempers. Some are more prone to be afflicted with disease than others,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'By different tempers do you mean the four tempers of the body—the choleric, phlegmatic, plethoric and melancholic?'

'No, I have seen people of all these humours being afflicted alike and their dying. But I think there must be some other condition which is conducive to disease.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam argued: 'Thus, what you considered to be a cause no more remains a cause because without the receptivity of the temper it is rendered ineffective. Apart from this, there are places in Europe where they take every care about sanitation and which are always kept clean, yet there are cases of cholera. Thus, if your thinking is right, there should be no question of an outbreak of cholera there. For a long time doctors considered it to be highly infectious; so much so that no one would go to look after one who was suspected to be suffering from it. In the event of one's death they burnt all his clothes, smoked and fumigated the house, got it whitewashed and even dug out the earth and threw it away. Even now they have strict quarantine rules at most of the sea ports. However, if cholera is an infectious disease, it may have originated in our country and been carried over to Europe because of the intermingling of people. But now, most of the renowned doctors agree that there is no truth about its being infectious. Even though many new sciences have come up and the science of medicine has also made great progress but

it is still presumptive in nature. And, the Divine Order demands it to be so. The belief that cholera was infectious, was presumptive; when it is agreed that it is not, it is still presumptive. However much the doctors may make conjectures, so far nobody knows what cholera is, how it originates and develops, and how it dies away. Just as there is no proven cure for a snakebite, there is no sure cure for cholera as yet. So, my friend, I do not want to lose my faith. In my heart of hearts I am convinced that we are here in this world not of our own will; God has created us; it is He who has fixed the lifespan of each one of us and He alone knows how long or short it is to be; no one else knows of it, no one will die before one's time is up. Then, why should we worry? And, when nobody can survive after his appointed time, why should we exult? The Qur'an says: "To every people is a term appointed: when their term is reached, not an hour can they cause delay, nor (an hour) can they advance (it in anticipation)." (7:34).'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt replied, 'Well, it seems you do not believe that this world is a place of cause and effect. Perhaps, you do not even believe in reason and prudence.'

'I do believe it to be a place of cause and effect but what it means to me is that God is Himself the Master of all things and it is His wisdom that has laid out a net of cause and effect. And, to me the relation between cause and effect is one of the Divine mysteries, incomprehensible to man's intellect. The causes do not have even as much to do with creation or the act of creating as a craftman's tools have to do in his work. The craftsman needs the tools whereas God the Great does not need to have any cause. But, with exceptions, the Divine practice has been always the same, that is, every event has a cause. The causes are never ending and to enumerate them is beyond the powers of man. God revealed to man only what He considered to be appropriate. "O men, of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you," says the Qur'an. (17:85). Man's intellect is not infallible but, God forbid, how many detestable mistakes people commit in their finding the relation between causes and effects! They are born and live in the world of causes. Hence, for every event they

try to find a cause. Often, when they are unable to find the real cause, they cling to some notional causes. There are many absurd things like astronomy, the art of divination by examining the entrails of a lamb, geomancy and conjecture and physiognomy, etc., which have nothing but notional causes as their origin. And sometimes the overall cause is all right but they forget its conditions. For instance, suppose there is a lead ball and another made of cotton, less in weight but of the same size. If both are dropped down from the top of the Qutb Minar at the same time, the lead ball will be the first to touch the ground. This is a fact and the cause of this is the difference in their weights. But there is a condition to it, and that is, there is no vacuum in the passage of the two balls from the top of the minar to the ground, for, if there was a vacuum, both the balls—the lighter and the heavier—would touch the ground at the same time. Moreover, man tries to find causes to suit his own convenience, that is, the sort which he is familiar with. For instance, no one will be surprised if a patient, however serious his condition, recovers after he takes medicine, because his recovering after taking medicine is an expected thing. But suppose someone cures a patient of a disease by breathing his breath into him or by his looking straight at him instead of giving him medicine, hardly one among hundred would believe it. Even most of those who see it happen would ascribe it to sorcery, casting of a spell or beguiling. That is why philosophers and atheists have all along raised severe objections to miracles. I have read the argument of some atheist who says, "Law of Nature or the Divine Practice is the touchstone of evidence, that is, an evidence can be relied upon only up to the extent that it accords with the Law of Nature." What he means to say is simply that we cannot accept any evidence which is contrary to the Law of Nature. Or in other words, contrariness to the Law of Nature is enough to render any evidence a lie, a thing to be refuted. Now, this is a clear case of begging the question. If someone says that a particular event has taken place against the established norm, for example, a person has slaked the thirst of a whole army with just one bucket of water. Then, is it not audacity, injustice and a case of twisting

the argument to deny this event simply because it is strange? The Qur'an says: "Nay, they charge with falsehood that whose knowledge they cannot compass even before the elucidation thereof hath reached them: thus did those before them make charges of falsehood but see what was the end of those who did wrong!" (10:39). A widely prevalent and dangerous mistake about the causes is that results are attributed to them in a way as if they alone are the agents and controllers: water grows grain, quinine is the killer of fever, arsenic is a deadly poison. And this, may God grant us protection from it, is in essence the presumption of our giving secretly partners to Allah, and I think the Qur'an refers to the same fact when it says: "Most of them believe not in Allah without associating (others as partners) with Him!" (12:106). In short, the discussion about causes is really ticklish in which one may easily slip into error.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said: 'Well, no one says that the axioms of the science of medicine are as definite as the propositions of arithmetic. But this science has made as much progress, at least in that in Europe there has been a rise in the average age of man. There is an all-round increase in population. Sure cures for some diseases have been found and such diseases no more occur there. Doctors cure many a disease with authority which did not formerly respond to medicine. Though the principles of health and hygiene are presumptive in nature, yet they have become almost certain now. In short, events and results verily prove that man's prudence has come a long way to improve his health and life; and to deny it is to deny the obvious.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam asked, 'Why, do we not have people in our country who live long? We too have people who have many children. There are very many people who are always, or more often than not, healthy and do not need any medical treatment. On the contrary, I am inclined to think that those who care too much for their health often fall sick.'

'That which is contrary to the established norm I count as accident,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

Hujjat-ul-Islam refuted this, 'You have not pondered over it well. Firstly, the science of medicine is itself not perfect. Then,

however imperfect, incomplete or presumptive it may be, if we look at the entire population of the world there will be hardly one among hundred who strictly observes the principles of medical science. The thing is that God the Kindly One has created every man with his physician. And who is his physician? It is his nature. A man's health is always beset with internal and external dangers. God knows how many of them are still unknown and how many of the known ones are beyond the control of man. So, to know or not to know about them amounts to the same thing. In short, nobody knows what hazardous disease my afflict him tomorrow or even in the next few moments so that he may guard against it. It is his nature which becomes alert and resists it as soon as he is afflicted. Man's nature is not only prudent and a physician as well but it has also a cure for all sorts of ailments. If he has still some life to live, his nature overpowers the disease, otherwise he is himself overpowered by it and meets his death. As far as medicine is concerned, it is there only to give strength to the patient's nature or rather more to the persons who look after him. I have seen people dying as well as recovering in the hands of renowned and expert physicians. When one dies it is said, "Fate had decreed him to have only this long a life. The physician did his best but what can he do if one was destined to live no more?" And, if one recovers, no one talks of God or fate; everyone praises the physician, his diagnosis and prudence.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt's retort was thus: 'Well, you are talking like the fatalists. Whatever you have said means that prudence is of no avail and that man's health and life are things pre-destined by God, and that man has no say in them. But this is what you believe while the rest of the world believes in the science of medicine. By the science of medicine I do not mean any particular system—homeopathy, allopathy, Greek or Vedic. What I mean is that people all over the world have always believed that health, or cure for a disease or survival of life or whatever you may call it, can be managed by man's prudence. We are not at present concerned whether a particular prudential step in itself is right or wrong. Magic, mantras, amulets and all

sorts of hocus-pocus are included in it. In short, there has been a consensus in every age that man's prudence helps in improving his health and life. This is my first contention. People in every age, wise and ignorant, from cities or villages, all alike agree on this point. It requires no better proof than this. You lose sight of the real issue by your bringing in so many irrelevant things into the discussion. My second contention is a corollary of this first. And that is, of all the prudent steps which people take to keep good health, the English system of medicine and things appertaining to it are the best. As a proof of this, I may quote instances confirmed by the census reports.'

'Well, well!' said Hujjat-ul-Islam. 'I quite understand what you want to arrive at. If you have some difficulty to understand what I mean, let me say it again. It is quite simple. If people in every age have tried to keep good health, it does not mean that man can determine it as well. What you have proved is only that people want to keep good health and that every man takes steps in that regard as best as he can, right or wrong, proper or improper. Likewise, every man wishes to know about the future, and people in every age have always been after it. Astronomy, geomancy, the examining of the entrails of a lamb, augury and the taking of omens, interpretation of dreams, physiognomy, auspicious and inauspicious time, palmistry, breath-feeling, etc.—all such sham practices are meant for the same purpose. And, don't think that only the uncivilised people of Asia have this madness, for, as far as I know even the Europeans are not free from it. In short, no one is free from the anxiety about the future. But can we infer from this that man has any say in what is hidden from him? Then, the word 'say' is a dubious one. If it means 'relation' or 'concern', however little it may be, then man is, or may be concerned with all the things that exist in the world because this whole workhouse of the world is meant for him. It is true that there are a few things in which man can use his own discretion. Though his discretion is quite limited, yet owing to this discretion alone he is called the vice-regent of God on this earth. Man is not so powerful a creature on account of his physical strength. It is on the basis of his intellect that he

wishes to soar up to the skies. How nicely has a poet described this position of man:

> What a din this man made of dust has made!
> From this earth below to the highest heavens
> He is showing his power!
> A whole oceanic tumult he has in his breast
> Though he remains a mere drop!
> Bravo, you who have the capacity to hold
> An ocean within you!

'Man is here down on earth yet though the heavenly bodies are not within his reach, he sets his time by their movements, as the Qur'an says: "It is He who made the sun to be a shining glory and the moon to be a light (of beauty), and measured out stages for it; that ye might know the number of years and the count (of time)." (10:5). Man has established himself over the whole earth. He brings into his possession not only the inorganic stones and plants, and rules over the elements, but the most powerful and carnivorous animals also fear and obey him, yet with all this man is not the absolute agent in any work and not the real determinant of any thing. It has been so well explained in Chapter *Al Wāqi'ah* of the Qur'an: "Do ye then see?—The (human Seed) that ye throw out,—is it ye who create it, or are We the Creator? We have decreed Death to be your common lot, and We are not to be frustrated from changing your forms and creating you (again) in (forms) that ye know not. And, ye certainly know already the first form of creation: Why then do ye not celebrate His praises? See ye the seed that ye sow in the ground? Is it ye that cause it to grow, or are We the Cause? Were it Our Will, We could crumble it to dry powder, and ye would be left in wonderment, (saying), 'We are indeed left with debts (for nothing): indeed are we shut out of the fruits of our labour.' See ye the water which ye drink? Do you bring it Down (in rain) from the Cloud or do We? Were it Our Will, We could make it salt (and unpalatable): Then why do ye not give thanks? See ye the Fire which ye kindle? Is it ye who grow the tree which feeds the fire, or do We grow it? We have made it a memorial

(of Our handiwork), and an article of comfort and convenience for the denizens of deserts. Then celebrate with praises the name of thy Lord, the Supreme!" (56:58–74).

'God has mentioned four things here: progeny, cultivation, water and fire, and has explained the part played by man in bringing forth each of them. And then by way of confutation, He says, "Have you created your children or We? Have you grown the crop or We? Have you rained water from the clouds or We? Have you made the fuel for making fire or We? We have made death standing on you and no one dares escape from Us. If We so will, We make your water salt." In short, both the conditions, of man's discretion and his helplessness, have been shown here. Man is neither totally helpless, nor is he invested with full authority. His position is in-between the two.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt replied with this argument: 'Well, there is a difference in words between what you and I say otherwise you also accept man's discretion, although limited. I also say the same thing, that is, man's discretion has been limited so far but it is so because of himself. Now, as newer and newer inventions are being made, man is becoming conscious of his immense power. For instance, after such a long time he now knows what steam and electricity are and how much control he has over them. Similarly, he has now found out the extent of his power over his health and life. Many a disease he has controlled. And he is in a position that if he so wishes, they cannot break out, or even if they break out, he may make them extinct. And, if the science of medicine and chemistry and other natural sciences continue to progress at the same speed as they have been during the last one hundred years, the day is not very far off when man will become the master of his health, and it won't be a surprise, even of his lifespan.'

'God forbid! What bad beliefs you have!' said Hujjat-ul-Islam. 'You really seem to believe that it is only a matter of days that man, God forbid, will become God!'

'You know what the atheists already say, "Who has seen God? It is only a presumption." '

'God forbid! There is no power nor strength except in God! If we have not seen God, does it mean that God is not there?

We have not seen the soul either, nor can we see it. Shall we deny the existence of soul, too?'

'Excellent, you define an unknown thing by another unknown thing. They do not believe in a soul either!'

Hujjat-ul-Islam was not satisfied. 'All the philosophers agree that man's knowledge of himself is direct and among the most self-evident of things. Everyone calls himself by the word "I" and says "*my* heart, *my* mind, *my* body" which means everyone believes in his "being" besides his body. I do not think any other proof is required for it, and if you think it is not so, it is a madness of your mind and it is useless to discuss it with you any further. But then, why do you bring a bad name to Islam by calling yourself a Muslim? And, why mislead the people? True, you take pride in Islam and extol it in assemblies and in your writings but that Islam of yours is only a profession which should be called a distinguishing mark of a community. I have seen several Muslims of shaken faith like you. They also suffered from such scruples and doubts. They listened to the objections of the irreligious, atheists, Christians and of persons who are anti-Islam, and couldn't find answers or were not satisfied with the answers. They thought it easier to twist the meanings of the precepts of Islam. They think that they support Islam but in fact, Islam suffers more from their twists of meaning rather than from the objections of anyone who is opposed to it. They ignore the Traditions or the sayings of the Prophet of Islam by their saying that they were compiled one hundred and fifty years after him. Only the Qur'an is left and this they distort by twisting its meaning.'

Just then they were informed that their meal was served.

24 Hujjat-ul-Islam Goes Back to the City

'I think I should go back to the city now,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'Do you think that your staying and dining with me is against Islam?' Ibn-ul-Vaqt asked.

'Well, let us not discuss religious matters. Religion cannot be ingrained in someone's heart through discussion or polemics. "That is the Grace of Allah, which He will bestow on whom He pleaseth," says the Qur'an. (5:54). God bestows on certain souls the capacity to be impressed by religious precepts and only they imbibe them.'

'Again you speak like the fatalists. When God Himself makes only certain souls receptive to religion, why is there then any reckoning and punishment?'

'Yes, why shouldn't it be? There ought to be a just punishment as the Qur'an says: "Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him." (65:7).'

With these words Hujjat-ul-Islam rose. Ibn-ul-Vaqt too got up and said, 'Do you really not want to stay with me?'

'Oh no, it is not that!'

'But there must be some reason?'

'The fact is that it will be inconvenient for you and I will also be uncomfortable.'

'Please don't bother about my inconvenience. You just let me know what you need and everything will be arranged to your satisfaction. No formalities, please.'

'How many things can you take care of? Firstly, there is no place here where I can say my prayers. Each and every room has pictures in it. It is as though the whole bungalow is an idol-house. Then, you have so many dogs that no one dares to make the prayer calls here, and I am not at ease unless I say my prayers in congregation in a mosque. I saw the bungalow inside out as soon as I arrived. Please try to understand, I cannot stay in such a house even for a day. I do not find it comfortable in any way.'

'But let us have dinner before you leave.'

'Dinner? You will kindly excuse me, I've heard all about your food and kitchen from your cook.'

'Is my cook worse than even the unclean, dirty bakers? Please see the table at least.'

'My dear, no doubt your table may look well laid—all too clean. I have never seen you at the dining table but I have seen

many Englishmen taking their meals. I have my doubts about your cook.'

'Oh yes, I know he takes all sorts of things but I have nothing on my table which you need abstain from.'

'Oh no, don't tell me that. I have myself seen wine in one of your cupboards.'

'But that is only for the English Sahibs. I never drink. I will die if ever I take it. My lungs do not permit me.'

'I cannot be sure of your food when you have wine in your store and you serve it to the Sahibs and your cook too does not abstain from anything.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt called his servant, 'Boy!'

'Yes Sir?' the servant said.

'Call the cook here.'

When the cook came in, Ibn-ul-Vaqt asked him, 'What have you prepared today?'

'Soup, mutton chops, cutlets, ox-tongue, boiled rice and pudding.'

'Have you used liquor in any one of them?'

'No, Sir, but it is required for the fermentation in the pudding.'

'Does it make the pudding intoxicating?'

'Not at all, Sir.'

'You may go.'

'So you see for yourself!' said Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'What? Has the cook not just said before you that the pudding is not intoxicating? My dear sir, it is intoxication which makes wine forbidden in Islam. What harm is there when there is no intoxication? And, if it is still objectionable to you, do not take the pudding.'

'God forbid, why the hell should I take your dubious tasteless food with a fishy smell and forego my excellent pure food?'

'It is so hot, you are unnecessarily going to the city and risking your health.'

'Well, mine is not a unique life. The whole city is there. I am no different. If they suffer, let me too.'

'When do we meet again?'

'Well, please don't try to come to the city, for, you already dread the city climate. Tomorrow being Friday, I will not be free. The day after I'll be visiting some people in the city. God willing, I'll come on Sunday morning at about ten. If it is not inconvenient, please send your steward to me tomorrow after the sunset prayers. I want to ask him about the Englishmen here and about you as well.'

25 Hujjat-ul-Islam Explains

It was a surprise to all when Hujjat-ul-Islam came back home. After their evening meal all of them had gone to sleep, for they thought that he would be staying with Ibn-ul-Vaqt. As soon as he entered the house he heard his mother-in-law say, 'Oh God, if he has not eaten there, what can I make at this late hour. I may have omelette, but no, it is already too hot and he has journeyed too long. Eggs will not be good for him as they may be too hot. There is some sweet *sivayyān* (vermicelli) but it is made of fine flour which is not easy to digest at this hour. I won't advise that. *Khichrī* made of rice and split pulse will make him more thirsty.'

Meanwhile, Hujjat-ul-Islam came forward and said, 'My dear mother, I am feeling very hungry.' Thank God, there were a few pieces of *shāmī kabāb* (meat cutlets) and some bowls of well-chilled firnī (ground rice boiled in milk) which had been kept for the children. A few pieces of *nān-khatā'ī* (sweetmeat pieces), some apple jam and pickle were also stored in the cupboard. The maid hurriedly made two or three nice hot *parānthās* (layered bread baked in butter) on the *tavā* (an iron flat pan). In short, whatever little food which was made available at that late hour was better than what was prepared at Ibn-ul-Vaqt's place with all his care. Hujjat-ul-Islam ate his meal while his mother-in-law sat there talking to him.

She said, 'My dear son, why are you so late? I think you must have reached Ibn-ul-Vaqt's place well before sunset.'

'Yes, I said my afternoon prayers there. Actually I wanted to stay with him.'

'Then why did you come back so late at night?'

'I wouldn't have come back if I could have expected a little comfort there and would have persuaded myself with the thought "better at his place than at a *serai* or an inn!" But no, you are talking of my living or staying there! I found that a Muslim can hardly stay there even for a moment. I said my afternoon and evening prayers there but I'm afraid I did not say it properly. I have to repeat them now with the night prayers. I couldn't say them with others in congregation because there isn't a single mosque within a half mile radius. As far as his bungalow is concerned, well, there's not a corner left without pictures where one may say one's prayers. I had to say my prayers in the verandah but how difficult it was when there were dogs there, ready to pounce on me. Two or three of them were very fierce and dreadful; they would have pounced on my neck, had brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt not rescued me in time.'

The mother-in-law was shocked. 'Oh no, God forbid. But then why did all these people tell me that it was out of jealousy that he was given a bad name? And, why do they say that whoever calls him irreligious has himself nothing to do with religion?'

'The Divine Islamic Law does not allow anyone to be called a kāfir. Brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt makes no secret about his being a Muslim. He openly says he is a Muslim—and a Muslim he is but his lifestyle and his food are like those of the Englishmen and not the least different.'

'Ah! what an ominous moment it was when the Englishman happened to come here during the Mutiny. It changed the whole thinking of my child. Ibn-ul-Vaqt kept him here so secretly that even we did not know that a *firangī* had been hiding in our house. We came to know of it only at night on the day when the English army had entered the city. Had I even an inkling of his presence, I wouldn't have kept him here even for a moment. God knows where the wretched man had come from. Had he

not come, I wouldn't have lost my child. But then, look, how my suffering has visited him with trouble. To invite the sigh of an oppressed one is not good. God afflicted him with such a disease that he lay there all alone in a corner and had to leave at last. May disgrace overtake him! May God grant that he never comes here again!'

'You unnecessarily curse the English gentleman. The favour which he has done to this family can never be returned. Had he not stayed here, all the ladies here would have been widowed and the children orphaned. The whole locality would have been ruined, and nothing would have remained of the household goods. Brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt was after all, not a child to be lured by an Englishman. He is an educated, sensible and an intelligent man. That is why he was made a Deputy Collector right away, and he has performed his duties very well; no other Deputy Collector is so efficient. Who can entice such a man? And how could he be enticed and made a Christian? Only the Englishmen know how much he has criticised and still criticises their religion. How can the Englishmen entice a man like him? On the contrary, they are jealous of him and feel his thorn in their flesh. All this fuss is because of one thing. I guarantee the reconciliation between him and the Collector if brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt starts living like an Indian.'

'Then you advise him, my son.'

'I may advise him a hundred thousand times, but he must be prepared to listen to me. Nobody has any idea of what has happened. I recall the words of my father-in-law about brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt's extraordinary intelligence and lofty ideas. He had said, "This boy is quite dangerous. God knows what he may do when he grows up." '

'One of our relatives, Aban Sahib, once told me that the Englishman had become quite enamoured of him because of his intelligence and that it was he who had incited him to this change. If he had not helped him, Delhi would not have fallen to the firangīs. Yes, I again say that the Englishman has cast a spell over my child. May God ruin him!'

'What has he done? He had him made a Deputy Collector straightaway and a holder of a large estate!'

'No, my dear, he must have cast a spell over him.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam laughed at this and said, 'Do you know that the English do not believe in things like casting a spell?'

'How can I know? I have only heard that the firangīs are great magicians. It is the power of their magic which allows them to conquer country after country. They have a magic formula through which they can get information from far off places in a moment.'

'That magic is their mind.'

'Well, then, you write to their Queen-Empress.'

'What?'

'That her firangīs are proving to be too cruel. They have lured one of our men and made him one like themselves. If she is really a Queen-Empress, she will listen to our complaint and see that justice is done. But listen, some of them say, "Don't write to the Queen-Empress. The Company is her daughter and the Queen-Empress has given this country to her as her dowry. It is the Company, then, which rules." But you know better. Write to some such person who may at once give orders on his receiving your letter. Tell me, if there has ever been such stark injustice as this. The firangīs themselves send for and make him one with them. And then another firangī comes, so cruel, that no sooner does he arrive than he becomes an enemy. Look, my dear, you have to write all these things to the Queen-Empress. Don't forget. Let the firangīs here be exposed and realise what it means to entice an innocent man. Ah! Once the kingdom was lost and these firangīs have now become so headstrong and self-willed.'

'Brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt may himself well know what step to take. Who can think better than him? You just pray to God. That is the best counsel. Brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt does not carry any blame on him. He does not take bribes, he does not shirk work, he is not inefficient. No one can do him any harm even if it is someone higher up than the Collector. All this fuss is because of his taking to the English lifestyle. God is the Great Changer of hearts, it is He alone who can change his heart!'

26 Reconciliation

While leaving his district, Hujjat-ul-Islam was aware that people in Delhi would think that he had come to help his brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt in the given circumstances. But personally he felt he would be of little help to him. He said to himself, 'Brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt has offered to sell me his bāradarī house but I neither have the money to buy it nor can I afford to live in that large house. To live there requires a stately lifestyle. Besides, I have always served away from my native place, Delhi. I am not known to any of the officials there and have no contact with them. My visit will not serve any purpose but it will be ungracious on my part if I keep away. Well, God is Exalted, He is the Causer of causes. Inscrutable are His ways! Perhaps, I may become a means to rescue him from this difficulty.' With these thoughts in his mind he went to see his immediate senior, the Collector who asked him, 'Will you spend your leave in Delhi or do you intend to go somewhere else too?'

Hujjat-il-Islam replied, 'Sir, as you know, on my way back from the Haj pilgrimage I could not go to Delhi. From Bombay I went to Calcutta and then I came here. Now, I shall straightaway go to Delhi and probably will have to stay there for the whole period. God willing, every fortnight or so I shall send you a letter.'

'I do not know who the Collector is there these days,' said the Collector.

'It is one Mr Sharp.'

'William Theodore Sharp?'

'The initials are W.T.—maybe it is the same.'

'But he was somewhere in Dera Ismail Khan.'*

'Yes, he was transferred from somewhere there.'

'If he is William Theodore Sharp, then he is a relative of

---

*Now in Pakistan.

mine. My cousin (daughter of my maternal aunt) is married to him. She is in England these days. If you wish to see him, I could write him a letter.'

'Now I must see him, for, firstly he is the District Officer there, and secondly, he is your relative.'

The Collector wrote a letter to Mr Sharp and also gave Hujjat-ul-Islam a copy of his photograph for Mr Sharp. He had written: 'Of all the Deputy Collectors in this area I like Mr Hujjat-ul-Islam the most. Most of the Government employees here are Bengalis as though Government service is their monopoly. I really dislike them. A little knowledge of English has made them so presumptuous, disrespectful and impudent that they have become severely critical of the Government administration. If they were truly brave and adventurous, like the people of upper India, they would have thrown off the yoke of English rule. Thank God, all their bravery only amounts to some words but even then their grumbling irritates me and I always curse myself as to why I chose this district of such conceited, ungrateful and evil-minded people. There are a very few persons here like Mr Hujjat-ul-Islam. He is firm in his traditional lifestyle and enjoys it. I have great regard for him for he holds that it is a meanly act to copy others like baboons. He was in Arabia during the Mutiny. Like every true Muslim, he says that the English Government had really disappointed the Muslims. It put the Hindus and the Muslims on an equal footing without realising the difference between the conditions of the two communities. He gives a good example in his regard. He says that the Government is akin to mother's milk and Muslims, the child who has just been weaned off but remembers the taste of the milk and longs for it. A comparison of Hindus with Muslims is like a comparison of an old man of a hundred years of age with a child of two or three years. He had also been breastfed years ago, but has long forgotten the taste of his mother's milk. He does not remember whether it was sweet or insipid. Now, shall we treat the weaned-off child with harshness simply because he pulls a wry face and does not show the same liking for khichrī as an old man does? For hundreds

of years the Hindus have had no living literature and sciences. It was not difficult for them to adopt the English language. It was like a naked man who would value highly even a waist-cloth. But the Muslims take pride, and rightly so, in their classical language, Arabic, which they regard as the mother of languages and without which Urdu and Persian would be colourless. Millions of Muslims are fascinated by the eloquence of the Qur'an and learn it by heart. Muslim literature is a living one, not dead and buried in books as that of Sanskrit and Latin. Their sciences have only withered but not become dead by the revolution of Time. So, the Muslims had a reason for their not wanting to learn English. Mr Hujjat-ul-Islam emphatically says that equal rights for the Hindus and the Muslims may appear to be just, yet if one ponders a little, this is no more just than a raja who has all the varieties of rice sold at five seers a rupee throughout his kingdom. Muslims are not native to this country. They came to conquer but settled here. Never for a moment did they think of confiscating the estates of estate-holders, nor did they have any need to. Government service was thought to be a more respectful means of living in those days and it was well in their hands. With the decline of the Muslim Empire they lost even that one means. Whereas the Hindus have all other means at their disposal as before. Still, they claim a fifty per cent share in Government jobs.

'I think I have not misunderstood him. But these are his personal views and I differ with him on certain points. But if you give him an opportunity, you will hardly find a subject on which he does not have a valuable and reasonable contribution to make. He is a good conversationalist and easily attracts others to his arguments. He said one more such thing to me, and that also seems convincing. He speaks highly of his community as opposed to that of the Hindus because he says Islam preaches self-respect in that it makes a man respectable in his own eyes. A Muslim thinks it is an insult to humanity if like a Christian one turns the other cheek after being slapped. Islam has made the concept of the one-ness of God very clear and has left no doubts about it. A Muslim does not adore or worship any existing worldly or heavenly body. He only worships the invisible

God. According to Mr Hujjat-ul-Islam, Islam consists of self-respect, frankness, simplicity, resignation to the Divine Will and contentment. As against this a Hindu may adore even monkeys, snakes, cows, the *peepal* tree, the *tulsī* plant, fire and water and stone, the moon and the sun, and all sorts of things. Which in other words implies that man is the humblest creature and that he should live in the world as such. From all this, Mr Hujjat-ul-Islam infers that a Muslim is born to rule and govern just as a Hindu is to work and obey. He says that a Muslim cannot stoop to flattery, servitude and meanness and if a Muslim does so, know it that he is not firm in his faith. This is the reason, according to him, that Muslims are so few in number in Government jobs. I often provoke him to say something more on this point. Thus, one day he said, "Muslims may be totally wiped out but they cannot forget that they ruled over this country for six hundred years."

'However, with all these thoughts Mr Hujjat-ul-Islam is a great well-wisher of the English Government. I firmly believe that if he had been in those districts during the 1857 Mutiny, he would have done something spectacular as a well-wisher of the Government just like, or rather more than, his brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt. He says, "I have seen the type of Islamic kingdom Arabia has. The country is in a state of ruin. It is a pity that the place the Muslim community originated from and where the foundation of their Empire was laid is in such bad condition. In spite of the fact that every year millions of Muslims go there on pilgrimage there is no peace. The people live on others' charity. They have so degraded themselves that they are not only the worst example of Muslims but also that of human beings." '

This letter reached Mr Sharp on Friday evening. He went through it and thinking that Mr Hujjat-ul-Islam had himself brought it, he came out. But he found that he was only seeking an appointment through a bearer. He sent him word that he could come any time other than the court hours. The next day at about seven in the evening just as Hujjat-ul-Islam got down from his palkī, Mr Sharp came back from his evening ride. Both of them guessed each other's identity. Generally, Mr Sharp kept

the visitors waiting a full hour after his ride but on seeing Hujjat-ul-Islam, he had no sooner alighted from the horse than he asked the orderly to send in the man who had come in the palkī. After the exchange of greetings he looked intently at him and politely offered him a seat and said, 'Victor Sahib has written so much in detail about you that you are a stranger to me no more. He has a very good opinion about you and you certainly deserve it.'

'It is highly gracious on his part and thank you for your kindness in having such an opinion about me. I hold his pleasure dearer than his admiration for me,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'How is Deputy Ibn-ul-Vaqt related to you? Is he your brother?' Mr Sharp wanted to know.

'He is not my brother in that way. My wife is his cousin, daughter of his father's sister. As such, you may regard me also as his brother,' explained Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'That's what I thought,' said Mr Sharp. 'You do not resemble him and his style is just like that of the Englishmen. You must be staying with him?'

'No, I'm staying in the city,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'Well, perhaps you know all about him? What benefit did Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt see in his adopting this lifestyle?' asked Mr Sharp.

Hujjat-ul-Islam explained: 'The fact is that right from his college days Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt was predisposed towards English ways. In fact, we teased him for this. But he was so enamoured that he liked and favoured everything English. I still remember those days. Translations of books on Natural Philosophy and Astronomy were newly introduced in the Oriental classes. At first we all wondered at the description of the sphericity of the Earth, laws of its movement and gravitation and the solar system. Often, all of us silenced him in discussion. But he would never accept his defeat and only say, "The laws discovered by the English can never be wrong although I cannot explain them." This has been his tendency ever since his boyhood. His contact with Mr Noble gave it a further fillip during and after the Mutiny. He has had no personal interest or ambition behind it.'

'You seem to be right and it is increasingly becoming clear. But some people say that he has adopted this lifestyle because he wishes to become great,' said Mr Sharp.

'All greatness is for God. But when God has bestowed worldly greatness on you, everything that you have has the stamp of greatness. Even your dress. Whoever adopts it, becomes great in the eyes of the people. But I am sure that brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt does not have a boastful nature at all. He is not the least given to arrogance, vanity or self-complacency. It is all rubbish if anybody says so. We have been together since our childhood. We have studied and played together. Who can know him better than me? I do not know whether he has become boastful after the Mutiny but before that he had nothing of this sort in him. If anyone thinks that Government service and the grant of an estate has made him arrogant, it is a misconception because even before the Mutiny he was not a non-entity. As the General-Attorney he had full powers over the estate of Her Highness Nawab Mashuq Mahal Begum. And then, on account of his family honour and financial status he was counted among the elite of the city. And why not? Did he not have a large retinue of personal servants and attendants? Did he not own several *havelīs* (large houses)? His one big bāradarī, twelve-door house, alone is still worth at least the price of four or five bungalows. True, he did not have a big salary. But then, in the royal service it did not matter much. Everyone was getting small salaries but coupled with gifts and rewards and all that, a person earning ten rupees a month lived in great style which even a person earning hundred rupees a month in the English Government could not afford. In short, to call brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt boastful or arrogant is sheer nonsense. It is better to call it self-respect. Self-respect, I think, is a pre-requisite of gentleness. All men are equal though the Divine scheme of things demands a difference in rank and status. One is a father and another a son, one a ruler and another ruled, one a master and another a servant, one rich and one poor. If there is no self-respect, the whole world order will collapse. Self-respect means that a man should accept his status and act accordingly. If one has the power and means to have a carriage,

he should use it when necessary. There are officers both English as well as Indians, but there is a great difference between your way of governance and of ours. You may live here your whole life but still you will be a foreigner. As against this, we are inhabitants. We have our relations, kith and kin, friends, community, our religious customs, and various other sorts of ties with the other subjects. As such, we cannot even consider the freedom in running the administration, which you have. Ours is a very delicate position. Brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt had to face another difficulty. He had to work in his own city and his work also related to the investigation of the revolt and there may be hardly any person who is not involved in it. He might have avoided meeting people just to keep his conscience clear or on account of his self-respect, and the people might have seen it as arrogance. But kindly tell me, Sir, if you have seen any arrogance in him?'

Mr Sharp related to him the incident at Daryaganj.

'Now, although Victor Sahib has always been kind to me and I respect him, and all the English officers (for I realise that God has given them this superiority and the Divine Book makes it abundantly clear that one should obey one's rulers), yet had I met you or Victor Sahib at the Daryaganj crossing in those circumstances, I would also have done the same as brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt. I believe Victor Sahib would have never thought that I had misbehaved,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam.

Mr Sharp expressed his opinion: 'In your case I would also not have suspected it because you are an Indian and follow the Indian lifestyle. But though he is an Indian, your brother wants to become an English Sahib. Maybe he does not think so, but we take it to be an impertinence. This creates difficulties for us to meet other Indians. This is our national dress. If an Indian takes to our style of dress, we think that he is imitating and provoking us. After all, why should an Indian take to our style of dress which is not at all comfortable for him? What reason can there be other than a claim of equality with us? All such designs lead to dishonour the Englishmen, to weaken their Government and to lower their prestige. You too will not like

to be equated with men of lower status. Why should we then allow you, our subjects whom we have overpowered with our sword, to claim equality with us? Today, it is only Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt, tomorrow all of them including a scribe, and then any peon or coolie, will imitate us which would mean that we should give up our Empire and go back to England! No, this has not been done, nor will it be! And as I am a District Officer, it is my duty to see that nobody raises his head against the English Government. Those at the Centre do not see it, they do not come into contact with the people but it will be explained to them. It is only because of Noble Sahib that I have ignored it. But now I feel a strong report should be made against it. It will be better for your brother if you make him understand that.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam explained: 'To tell you the truth, I have not yet talked to brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt or written to him about the change in his lifestyle. I had received so many letters urging me to come to Delhi when he changed his lifestyle. But knowing brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt's nature, I knew that nobody would be able to make him understand this. Therefore, I kept silent and acted ignorant. It was as though the whole world had admonished him. They still call him 'a Christian' and 'a person with no religion'. He was declared an outcaste. Nobody, you know, accepts water from him. He thus lost his kinsfolk, relatives, friends, etc. He has brought on himself only disrepute and a bad name in every way. But still my dear brother does not listen. Now, Sir, kindly tell me how we can make him understand. People hesitate to associate not only with him, but with us also. I wanted my son to be engaged to a girl from a certain family. They took a long time to come to a decision. They had actually agreed to the proposal but then they finally said, "We have four daughters to be married. It wouldn't have mattered if you had proposed for all the four. If we marry one of them into your family, we shall become the object of scorn in the whole city." You may thus kindly realise how we are being dishonoured in our society. But what can be done? It is beyond us. Actually, I myself felt so disgusted about it that I was not at all inclined to come to Delhi. But then, I cannot ignore my native city and

relations here as brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt has done. His mother had passed away when he was just a child. His father's sister, that is, my mother-in-law, brought him up. I have no words to tell you what a shock this change in his lifestyle has been to her. For two years she had been sending letters asking me to come to Delhi but I was unwilling to come. When I learnt that brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt was in a great difficulty as his creditors were pressing him hard and that he was going to sell his big bāradarī house, I thought it would be rude on my part and inhuman if I did not come to Delhi. And so I came here.'

'What? Is Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt, a debtor?' asked Mr Sharp, surprised.

'Yes, a debtor. He has a debt of not one or two thousand but more than ten thousand rupees which he has to pay to M/s Gurvalas, the moneylenders, alone,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'But they say he has a lot of money,' said Mr Sharp. 'Did he not make a clean sweep of all Her Highness's wealth, the Begum Sahib. And in revolt investigations also he made a lot of money.'

'Do you think it is possible that a person with a lot of money would be paying interest to moneylenders or should want to dispose of an ancestral property which is a symbol of his ancestors' name and fame?' asked Hujjat-ul-Islam. 'If he had made any money in his service, people, as you well know, would have come to him long ago to recover their money on their learning of your displeasure with him. In short, there is not an iota of truth in whatever you have been told about brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt. They call him boastful and arrogant which is ludicrous. They call him a wealthy man which is entirely wrong. They call him corrupt which is certainly libel. Please examine the account books of M/s Gurvalas. You will discover what is right and what is wrong.'

'If this is so, why does Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt have a bad reputation? I haven't heard a word of praise for him from anyone,' said Mr Sharp.

'You do not quite understand the nature of the Indians, Sir. We are so jealous of one another that everyone wants to pull down the other. You know, it is an established fact that the

nature and character of a nation are vitiated before its actual decline. Brother Ibn-ul-Vaqt has an enviable position. The Mutiny was a curse to the people but to him it brought prosperity and good fortune. What greater fault is there in the eyes of the Indians than the fact that one from amongst them remained safe from all the miseries of the Mutiny? The Government acknowledged and appreciated his well-intentioned services and gave him a high post and a large estate, and the officials started to flatter him.'

Mr Sharp said, 'Well, whatever it may be, I cannot tolerate any Indian imitating the English.'

'I also think it is unfortunate. It is good that you have not been posted in the districts of Bengal. There the people do not only imitate the English, but also annoy and irritate you,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'Victor Sahib is also displeased and complains about the people there,' Mr Sharp remarked.

Hujjat-ul-Islam described the conditions further. 'After learning the English language they have become so emboldened that they have no regard for any officer now. They do not spare anyone without criticising him however carefully he may do his work. They strictly observe the laws and no officer dares to take an unlawful step for, they would shred him to pieces all the way to England even. There are countless vernacular papers in those districts. See any one of them. Invariably you will find they all censure the Government and the officials. Not only that, they find fault with the Government and write about it in their novels, and ridicule it in their theatrical performances and street plays. Here it is different. Only yesterday I was coming after saying my prayers in the Jama Masjid. An Englishman happened to pass that way riding on his horse. People stood there on both the sides of the road and saluted him. One of my servants from the districts of Bengal was following me. He was much surprised to see this. He asked one of them, "Who is this man whom they are saluting?" When he was told that it was a road contractor, he was surprised all the more. But then, the people told him that this was actually the way of the English Government here, that

is, one should salute an Englishman and if one doesn't, one is censured and even beaten.'

'Then, what do they mean by government in those districts?' Mr Sharp wanted to know.

'In those parts, they say that government only exercises the legal powers. Even then, only one who exercises this power knows how much he has to control himself there. But why worry? Here too English is becoming popular. Very soon these parts too will become like Bengal.'

'Never mind, by that time I would have completed my service. But tell me, what do you think will be the outcome of all this?'

'Only God knows about the outcome. But these are things which should be seriously addressed by the elders. What am I and my opinion worth?'

'Even so, everyone has his opinion, right or wrong.'

'Well, if you wish to hear it then let me say that I think, sooner or later, the outcome of education is likely to be the end of this present mixed type of Government. It is half English and half Asian for which the apt word would be "Eurasian" and which we call "*maghrezī*" in our language, that is, combination of the words *Mughal* and *angrezī*. I do not think this hybrid character of the present Government will last. The earlier extreme alienation and estrangement between India and England is growing less and less day by day. There are many reasons for it—English education, the growing number of English and vernacular papers, post and telegraph and railways and facilities to visit England, and the growing interest among the Indians and the English to know each other. In short, the more the Indians are awakened, the more they lose their awe of the English. The result will be that ultimately, Indians will wish that the Government of England and the Government of India should be one and that the Indians should have the same rights and powers in this country as you enjoy in England as English subjects.'

Mr Sharp said, 'The demand is reasonable because the Indians have well proved their loyalty during the Mutiny of 1857.'

'Sir, you unnecessarily blame the subjects for the Mutiny. After all, how were they concerned with the Mutiny? It was your army that revolted. Why should the subjects he held responsible? The subjects consist of the chiefs of the native states, large estate-holders, businessmen and craftsmen. Who can then call them rebels? Please name any group which revolted as a whole in the country. Then, Sir, the entire army too did not revolt. The revolt was just a silly uprising of a section of people on specific grounds and only in some places. Such uprisings often take place in England, too. God forbid, had all the people revolted, who could have ever subdued it?'

Mr Sharp then said, 'Well, the Mutiny is now a thing of the past. And, I think that it proved useful for the English Government because this single desire of the Indians is now spent. We Englishmen were always afraid of disturbances and tumult. We have now understood that a disturbance or tumult is like a scarecrow meant to frighten the children in this country. The whole country has been disarmed and the Government has become stronger and more satisfied now. But from what you say it seems that resentment and the thought of revolt still persists in people's minds and that it may surface one day. What sort of people are they that despite their facing so many miseries because of the revolt they do not give up nurturing such hopes? What they actually need is an Asian type of Government. They are accustomed to it and it will bring them to their senses.'

'It is beyond reason that an enlightened, cultured and civilised Government like the British one should imitate uncivilised nonsensical and inefficient governments,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'Then why is it that people do not appreciate the British Government as they really should?' asked Mr Sharp.

Hujjat-ul-Islam's reply was: 'There is not a single person of any religion or community in the whole of India who does not hold the British Government dear to his heart. We may be uncultivated, ignorant, uncivilised or whatever, but we are not so stupid that we cannot discern loss from gain. We understand and are grateful first to God and then to the British Government for the peace and prosperity, freedom and justice, security of life

and property and religion, in short, protection of all our rights, and our welfare and progress which they have brought us. Although we have not faced the miseries under an Asian Government yet we are not ignorant of its nature. We have heard so many heart-rending tales about it from our elders, and some of its specimens though incomplete and imperfect, thanks to the British Government, are still to be seen in certain native states. Besides this, many of us also find an opportunity to go and stay in other countries. In short, women living in seclusion also know that there is no such peace anywhere on earth as there is under the British Government.'

'You say all this but from what you said earlier it seems that people are still not happy with the British Government,' Mr Sharp pointed out.

'Well, I might have said so. But then, it is the same thing. The fact is that there are only a few persons in our country who can really understand political affairs. And most of them, rather all of them, have been supported by the Government. They were educated in colleges, and so they grew bold. In short, political awakening is the outcome of the new modern education. As education spreads, political awareness spreads too. The concept of national unity, which you call "nationality" is not to be found everywhere in India today nor is there any hope of its showing up in future. India will never have one religion for all, nor will its inhabitants become one nation. Thus, angry or displeased or whatever you may call them, it is only these modern, educated persons who go on censuring and condemning the British Government in newspapers and in their lectures. But this displeasure or discontent too is not at all antagonistic and rebellious. It is like someone of your staff who thinks he deserves a promotion but doesn't get it as much as he may wish for it. You say that people do not restrain themselves even after the Mutiny. On the contrary, my dear Sir, Indians are more flattered after it. Their expectations know no limits now. They say, "We were looted and plundered and ruined but, thank God, we got rid of the Company. A businessman may become a millionare, or a billionare even, but he is after all a businessman who gathers

his wealth by saving petty little pennies out of every pound. How can he be liberal and generous like a king? Besides this, the Company was just a lease-holder of the country and the lease too was for a fixed period. How can it consider the welfare of the subjects like a king?" In short, whatever they may or may not receive, (and why shouldn't they? They will surely receive) people have high hopes. They have not seen the Queen, nor is there any hope of seeing her but God knows why it is so that there is hardly a heart which does not feel elated by the Queen's name?'

Mr Sharp's opinion was: 'Well, nothing will come out of it. It is merely the noise and din raised by the Bengali bābūs. They have taken it into their heads that with their broken English they have become like the Europeans and that they should be treated like them. But basically they are not like Europeans. They have no "nationality" (national unity), no public opinion, no freedom, no bright-mindedness, no perseverance, no steadfastness, no courage, no truthfulness, no spirit of the search for truth, no concord and unity like that of the Europeans.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam's response was: 'What you say is right. But now they are taking to the English ways and by and by the Government too is giving them the right of self-determination. In the short period since the Mutiny see how much the Government has changed.'

Mr Sharp looked at the timepiece on the table and Hujjat-ul-Islam said, 'I am sorry I have taken so much of your time today.'

'I am much pleased to see you and as Mr Victor has written, you are remarkable for your knowledge and you have a fine sense of judgement. It will always be a pleasure for me to meet you. I shall thank Mr Victor for it. I am thankful to you also for giving me the correct information about your brother, Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt, otherwise they had made me quite suspicious of him.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam said, 'Now that I have known your kindness, I cannot resist requesting you to keep your heart open towards my brother, Ibn-ul-Vaqt.'

Mr Sharp said, 'The bad impressions I had of him have been removed, and I regret that I made a mistake in understanding him. Whatever the people told me about him, seemed completely in accord with his behaviour. I had taken all the work from him though the Commissioner had explicitly written that "the Investigation Department is a highly confidential one. Its judgements are not subject to the general rules. Do not allow any other person to see the files of this Department. The cases in which Mr Ibn-ul-Vaqt has taken any action, should be decided by him alone." But I had no mind to give him this work again and in a day or two I would have reported about it. But in the light of conditions you have explained to me I have changed my mind.'

'He does not at all mind your taking away his work from him. What he complains of is only that you did not give him an opportunity to explain himself to you, otherwise all this would have never happened,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'Thank God, I have done him no harm,' Mr Sharp said.

'No Sir, this is not so. He has been much disgraced in society.'

Mr Sharp said after a little thought, 'Let me think how I can make good the harm. He has taken to such a lifestyle that no Englishman would like to be on friendly terms with him.'

'Personally you have every right to meet him or otherwise; I make this request only in the interest of his official status,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'I shall keep it in mind.'

Thus, Mr Sharp sent all the complete and incomplete files of revolt-investigation back to Ibn-ul-Vaqt's department. Some words of consolation showing regrets were also included in the covering note. He also wrote a personal letter to Ibn-ul-Vaqt saying, 'Your brother Mr Hujjat-ul-Islam has removed all my doubts about you. I regret my mistake. If you keep to the lifestyle of your brother, which shows your national identity and which you yourself had for the greater part of your life, and let me say, which is befitting and comfortable for every noble Indian, then we will be good friends for life.'

27 On Religion

The next day Ibn-ul-Vaqt had been waiting for Hujjat-ul-Islam since early in the morning. Hujjat-ul-Islam could reach there only about half past ten after taking his meal. He was still at a distance when Ibn-ul-Vaqt saw him and said, 'You really have a good fate. It rained on the night you arrived and it was a heavy downpour at that—so the loo is now gone and the khas (scented grass) screens too will be out of use in a day or two.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam said, 'Praise be to God, and praise again be to Him!'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt asked, 'Why "again"?'

'I say "again" only once and you ask why. You know, God the Merciful always does so many favours to all His creatures that cannot be repaid by millions of such praises. I first praised Him for my good fate and then I praised Him because, after all, you confessed that there is something as "fate".'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'Thoughtlessly I uttered this word. It was just a way of speaking. Otherwise, I do not believe in fate. I think such absurd beliefs have made Muslims so lazy and worthless that no other community is so poor and destitute in the whole world.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam said, 'Why are you so much after the Muslims? Is it really necessary that you should vilify and condemn someone and call yourself triumphant and label yourself a reformer? It is not the Muslims alone, those who believe in God, of whatever religion they may be, also believe in fate. First try to understand what *taqdīr* or fate is. Literally, it means "to measure". Now, there is nothing in the world which is not "measured". The Qur'an says, "Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure." (54:49). (Every thing has its appointed time, place and occasion, as also its definite limitation.) So if there is a world, it has a fate, a measure. Or, try to understand it in

another way. You were not made an animal or a tree but a man, this is fate. You were made a man and not a woman, this is fate. You were born in India and at Delhi, not in Europe, Africa or America or in any other country, this is fate. You were born in a particular part of the 13th century A.H.* (19th century A.D.), not before or after, this is fate. You were born in a particular Muslim family, not in a Hindu or Christian or any other community or family, this is fate. You were brought up in certain conditions, you grew up and made yourself proficient, you were appointed the Agent of the estate of Her Highness Nawab Mashuq Mahal Begum, this is fate. You were in the city during the Mutiny. In those very days Noble Sahib happened to stay in Delhi on his way to England. The mutineers captured him and thought they had killed him. You happened to reach there and brought him half-dead to your place, dressed his wounds and looked after him until he completely recovered. No one knew of his stay at your place and at last he joined the other Englishmen. All this is fate. You had to leave your well-established house and the city. There, outside the city you wandered stupefied and the soldiers of the victorious army caught and nearly impressed you to work like labourers when Noble Sahib arrived on the scene just like an invisible spirit, and he rehabilitated you in your house with all honour and respect. He got you the grant of an estate and a high Government post. All this is fate. Meanwhile, you had an infatuation to become an Englishman. You gave very many dinners and parties. Why should you bother if the Indians were displeased with you and got irritated? You did not care even if the English felt offended. And, the low-minded in their greed for cigarettes and drinks, and the higher ones partly owing to Noble Sahib's kindness and partly owing to your good wishes for the British Government and your official status, willy-nilly started to visit you. You thought that the English people had accepted you in their society. All this is fate. By the Grace of God, your income at

---

*A.H. indicates the Hijri era which begins from 622 A.D.—the year of migration of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca.

once shot up to five hundred rupees a month. Had you lived like a simple Indian gentleman, you would have been a rich man today, and would have easily saved ten or twelve thousand rupees at least. But in your pursuits you just wasted whatever you earned and incurred a debt of ten or twelve thousand rupees instead. And, now you are thinking of selling your ancestral property. All this is fate. All of a sudden Noble Sahib had to leave for England. No sooner than he left, you had to face the music. All this is fate. You went on your evening ride as usual. One day, at the Daryaganj crossing you saw the Collector. He was on foot and you were riding on a horse. You did what you thought best but it turned against you. He took it as disrespect and called for an explanation. He took all your work from you and made you sit idle in your office without any work to do. All this is fate. For the last two years my mother-in-law had been writing to me to come here but I couldn't come. But when I learnt of the Collector's displeasure with you and your intention to sell your large bāradarī, I could not help myself. I took leave from my office and went to see Victor Sahib, the Collector. He happened to be the brother-in-law of Sharp Sahib, the Collector here. He himself gave me a letter for him. I met him. During the course of our talks he asked me about you. It was the Grace of God that his doubts were removed. All this is fate. Isn't it?'

'So this fate is like the proverbial Satan's gut. But please don't cavil at my words for I do not believe even in this Satan, the devil, either,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'What does it matter if you don't? Even if the whole world refutes, the facts are what they are. They cannot be wished away,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'Then, do you think that Satan is also someone existing in the exterior?' Ibn-ul-Vaqt asked.

'Yes, very much so, existing in the exterior.'

'If so, why can't we see him like other things existing in the exterior?'

Hujjat-ul-Islam answered, 'You know, there are countless tiny little insects in air and water which we cannot see without the help of a microscope. The flies have eyes, and there are oceans

and mountains in the moon which are clearly visible with the help of a powerful telescope. All these things exist in the exterior but we do not see them.'

'Whether we see them with our eyes or with the help of a telescope, it is seeing all the same,' Ibn-ul-Vaqt said.

'But would the people have believed in their existence in the exterior in the days when telescopes and microscopes were not invented? There are millions and millions of people even today who know nothing about microscopes or telescopes. Shall they regard these things as existing in the exterior or not?' asked Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'No, they cannot, and they will never believe.'

'Yes, but will it necessarily mean that flies have no eyes if people do not believe it? Similarly, if someone like you disbelieves in the existence of Satan simply because he cannot see him, how is this disbelief valid?'

'We believe that a fly has eyes because we see them with the help of a microscope. And, we believe in the mountains of the moon because we see them with the help of a telescope. Similarly, you please tell us some such way which may lead us to believe in the existence of Satan.'

'That way is in the bidding of God and His Prophet.'

'So then, it is not one of those things which are self-evident.'

'To those whose eyes are enlightened by the light of faith, this is not only self-evident but most manifestly self-evident. "Truly, it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts," says the Qur'an. (22:46).'

'If Satan is believed to have a unique existence, then God will have to be regarded as a tyrant and man as absolutely helpless. What sort of justice is this that a hidden enemy is appointed on man?'

'So, you mean to say that to create man is itself unjust because whether it is Satan with his unique existence or it is human power, the end of both is the same?'

'Well, your intellect may accept such idle tales. If you say so, I can also lie but I do not think that Muslims will ever prosper as long as they believe in fate or Satan or such absurdities.'

'No such oblique references, please! Do not confuse the issues. Take them one by one so that each may be properly discussed.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt argued thus: 'You yourself please tell me if belief in fate has not made the Muslims lazy and lacking in courage? The most devout, the heirs of the Prophets, the custodians and supporters and preachers of the faith, the divines and the holy persons, and apart from these others, our own family. You and I know it too well. May I ask what was the means of living of about one hundred and fifty persons, men and women? Charity! Everyone just sat idle doing nothing, resigned to fate.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam's answer was: 'Discussing people in their absence is backbiting and who knows about anyone's motives? But it is wrong to think that belief in fate has made Muslims lazy and lacking in courage. What is it that the Muslims have not done in the world? They have conquered lands, they ruled over many countries, they travelled through land and water, they carried out commerce and trade, they accomplished great works of art and craft, and they acquired knowledge, studied sciences and invented things. In short, they did all sorts of work in the world. They accomplished such great works that others could not do in those days. Even now, they are engaged in all sorts of useful activities—land-holding, cultivation, artisanship, a little commerce and trade, some reading and writing and some of them are in service. Had it not been so, how could they have sustained themselves? It is a different matter that they do not do what they ought to do or that they are slack in their work. But its reasons are different, not that belief in fate has made them lazy. Who is there who is not convinced of fate, be it a Hindu, or a Christian or a Jew? Thus, if only belief in fate were the cause of slackness, then all of them would have been also slack whereas you blame the Muslims alone. And, since no one knows about fate why should belief in it be the cause of slackness? Rather, there are very many instances which prove that belief in fate made the people work hard; it made them firm and steady and thus they were successful. One such instance is to be found in the tale of Jālūt and Tālūt, that is, Goliath and Saul. The army of Saul was small in number when it came face to face

with the army of Goliath. They said that they would not be able to take them on. On these words, a very small band of them, who believed that they would meet God after passing away from this world, said, "Often it has so happened that a small force has vanquished a big one and God is with those who steadfastly persevere." So, when they advanced to meet Goliath and his forces with all their might, they gave them a crushing defeat and Goliath was killed. This tale is referred to in the Qur'an. (2:247–49). Don't think it is an old tale. Such things often happen even today when with belief in fate alone people venture forth and overcome difficulties. As a poet says:

> One should not lose one's nerves
> There's no difficulty
> Which is not made easy to solve!'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt questioned Hujjat-ul-Islam, 'You said no one knows about one's fate. If this is so, how do people know that fate is agreeable and favourable for them to rely on, and muster courage to undertake fresh endeavours?'

'This one should ask those who rely on it,' replied Hujjat-ul-Islam. 'For instance, the followers of Saul were convinced of the favourableness of fate by what the Qur'an says, "God is with those who steadfastly persevere" and their convictions proved true. I know a case of a landowner. He had lost some part of his land. For twelve years the thought of getting his land released occupied his mind. No one listened to his plaints. He regularly said his prayers. One day he met me in a mosque. I told him not to worry and to have patience. He said, "Non-God-fearing lawyers and advocates spoiled my case but as they say 'truth always triumphs', I'll definitely get back my rightful land one day." Later, I came to know that he happened to find the District Judge alone in a forest. He related to him his whole case and convinced him of the truthfulness of his petition. The District Judge somehow got his land released. Now, this is only one aspect of the question of fate which I have presented before you and which shows how belief in fate strengthens one's heart when ultimate gain or success is destined. When one has a belief

in fate, he puts in utmost hard work and cheerfully endures all labour and pain. In case of failure, know it, my friend, there is no better recourse than belief in fate. One who believes in fate has the satisfaction that his failure is from God and consoles himself with the thought that there must be some good in it which is hidden from him. In short, belief in fate is a good thing but you criticise it. It is such a right thought and you disbelieve it!'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt's reply to this was: 'If ups and downs, joy and grief, that is, changes in the conditions of life, are the destined fate in the world, then it is difficult to believe in God as The Wise and The Just and The Merciful.'

'But, my dear, you find it difficult to believe even in God. May God first make it easy for you! Then all the matters of faith will look plain and simple to you, and then you may easily understand them. My dear brother, this is not the way to think about religious matters which you have adopted. The great mystic poet of Islam, Jalaluddin Rumi (d.1273 A.D.) says:

> If faith were a matter of argument
> Fakhruddin Rāzī* would have been its greatest keeper!

'What you say shows you do not want to understand religion like one who truly feels its need. You talk shrewdly about religious matters just as an artful lawyer advocate deals with the witness of the opposite party. This way one doesn't get the wealth of religion, nor can one get it. Let me suggest another way. Sometimes, ponder over what this world is. You may do it particularly at night when you are all alone and free from the worries of the world. The world is a huge workhouse. They say it is limited yet no one has found its utmost extent. In this huge workhouse, this earth with all its magnitude is not as significant as a tiny particle. Have you forgotten all those things which we discussed in physics? You argued the most about them. If all those things are true, and who can say that they are wrong when they are based on observation and the principles of mathematics, then, man has to confess his helplessness and insignificance. We

---

*Rāzī. A famous theologian and philosopher (d. 1209 A.D.).

may have a vague idea of a thousand, ten thousand, twenty thousand, fifty thousand, a hundred thousand kos, but how can we conceive of ten or a hundred billion kos? Well, is there any limit to these distances? Just imagine, if a bomb is thrown towards the sun and it constantly goes straight day and night at a particular speed, it will reach there in nineteen years. God is great! Eminent is His glory! Powerful and still more powerful telescopes were invented but how much of the heavenly bodies have we seen? Only a glimpse, and that too of the few out of the countless ones, which are comparatively nearer the earth. When the sky is clear on a dark night, how many stars we can see just like tiny strips of silver scattered all over. And, if somehow we could reach the highest star, from there too we would see the same spectacle as far as we could see. You may proceed further and further on in this way. Thus, God alone knows how far the stars are from us that they look like tiny dots. Those who know, and particularly you, should be convinced that just as two and two make four, similarly, what looks like just a tiny dot is a world in itself—a world so big that if you suppose it to be a large pitcher, this earth would be a mustard or poppy seed against it. With the help of telescopes we have known more about those stars which are near the earth, that is, those which are within ten thousand kos from us. We ought to know something about them for they are nearer to us. Thus, oceans, lakes, mountains, sun and shade, wind and clouds are all seen clearly in these stars. From their conditions and other indications, men of physics believe, and rightly so, that living beings also exist in those worlds just as they do on earth. And this puzzles human intellect all the more. How can we speculate about all the creatures of these countless worlds when apart from the numbers, we have not even been able to categorise the different species on the earth itself? "There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you," says the Qur'an. (6:38). I read somewhere that some modern philosopher was seeing a drop of water through a microscope. With great difficulty he could differentiate a little more than a hundred categories of living

beings in it. At last he gave up. When one drop of water has so many creatures in it, only God knows how many more creatures there are in the water which covers more than three-fourths of the earth? "None can know the forces of Thy Lord, except He," says the Qur'an. (74:31). Then, there is a forty-five mile thick region of air around the earth and it has also as many living beings in it or even more. Although the greatness and the glory of the workhouse of God's power is beyond the comprehension of man, yet as I have briefly mentioned it, if one constantly and with perseverance ponders over it for a fairly long time, one will certainly be convinced of one's helplessness, insignificance and worthlessness. And, that I consider to be the foundation or the beginning of religious faith. After that, one should ponder how this huge workhouse has been running so well in all its greatness and in such a disciplined way that just stupefies human intellect. Then, these countless spheres of heavenly bodies and the earth itself, are all revolving—God knows since when and why and for how much longer? And, they neither collide with one another nor even slightly vary their speed. Now that man has discovered their principles of motion, accurate predictions can be made even more than a hundred or thousand years earlier about the particular place and time a particular planet will be found. If there is no mistake in calculation, then, why consider even a minute or a second when there will be no difference in even a thousandth part of a second? "And the Sun runs its course for a period determined for it; that is the decree of (Him), The Exalted in Might, The All-knowing. And the Moon—We have measured for it mansions (to traverse) till it returns like the old (and withered) lower part of a date stalk. It is not permitted for the Sun to catch up with the Moon, nor can the Night outstrip the Day: each (just) swims along in (its own) orbit (according to Law)," says the Qur'an. (36:38–40). If you ponder over a tiny winged insect, a grain, a fruit, a flower-leaf, a blade of grass, or the smallest or the lowest thing on this earth, you will feel everything has a purpose as well as the means to fulfil it. For instance, if the camel is born in sandy lands, the soles of its feet are flat and soft like a sponge so that they do not sink into the

sand. It has a long neck so that it can eat the leaves of tall trees. It has been given a particular sort of stomach with cells in which it stores food because it is likely that it will find no food and water for weeks and weeks together in the regions where it is born. Then, it stores fat in its hump and draws on this reserve in adverse conditions. The legs of the wild animals like the deer, etc., are lean and thin so that they can run to save themselves from the carnivorous animals. The elephant has a trunk which it uses as its hand. The bodies of birds are light in weight so that they can fly. Water animals have short, webbed feet to swim fast as though they were natural oars. The paws and teeth of carnivorous animals are suited for their food. In vegetation, there are thorns, skin and shells to protect the fruits and flowers. The animals that live in cold climates have long and thick wool so that they may not feel the cold. The animals which perish soon, profusely breed so that their species may not become extinct. For instance, each fish lays a clutch of more than a hundred thousand eggs. As man can manage his survival with the help of his intellect he has not been given natural features like horns and claws and wool. A country which has more vegetation, has more rains because it needs more water. If man ponders over his own make-up, each and every hair of his body is a witness to the excellence, wisdom and kindness of The Author of Nature. As a poet says:

> On a root of hair when I put my ear
> I hear the running fountain of His Beneficence!

'One small part of a man's body is his hand. All his success and possessions, and considering his capacity one just wonders at them, are because of this part. The people of Europe have invented many fine machines which amply show the power of the human intellect. I had an opportunity to see a few of them. To make a single machine is a highly complicated affair and the process is spread over vast expanses of land. Hundreds of components, thousands of screws, rollers, wheels, pulleys, springs and God knows what other materials they use. Only then the particular purpose for which that single machine is made, is

achieved. This is about man-made machines. Look at an ordinary machine which God has made—this very hand of man which is employed to do a thousand types of work. Look at its structure. It is so simple and concise. It has just a palm and five fingers with three joints in each of them and that is all. Another tiny part in the human body is the eye. The description of the hidden skills in its making will take one whole book. Notice the outer protection for it. First there is a hollowed skeleton of bones in which the eye is set like a precious stone. It has a canopy having an eaves of brows on it. In the front there is a screen of eyelids with a fringe of eyelashes. Then the eyelid has pores through which there always gently flows a sort of moisture (from the tear gland) to keep the lens of the eye clean. If this moisture increases, it becomes a tear. It is like wiping (the eyeball) as many times as a man blinks. In conditions of dust, smoke and grittiness, tears at once flow down which means that wiping is not enough, the lens needs a wash. So, "blessed be Allah, The Best to create!", says the Qur'an. (23:14). How can I have the power to describe a little of the hidden secrets of wisdom that exists in the world when the Qur'an says, "If all the trees on earth were pens and the Ocean (were ink), with seven Oceans behind it to add to its (supply) yet would not the words of Allah be exhausted (in the writing); for Allah is Exalted in power, full of Wisdom." (31:27). But what I aim at is only that one should see the works of the world from this angle. Yesterday Ayatullah (the younger nephew of Ibn-ul-Vaqt) read out one of his lessons in his book to me. He is reading *'Ajā'ib-e-Qudrat*, The Wonders of Nature, these days. It is a selection of articles on natural philosophy which someone has translated into Urdu. It said that the thin trunk-like thing before a mosquito's mouth is really a small pipe which has three tools: one, the needle which the mosquito pierces through the pore; one small saw which may be used to widen the pore if required; and one cup with which it sucks blood. It also said that mosquito's lifespan is only three days. At another place it said that one wing of a butterfly has thirty thousand scales resembling tiles. If man does not look heedlessly at these things, as is his habit, then every particle will be an evidence that some

Highly Powerful, Wise, All-knowing, Omnipresent, Supervisor, and All-seeing One has consciously made it for some good. If a man sincerely ponders over what exists in the world, it is impossible that his inner heart will not speak out that such a huge workhouse with all its wonder and order has not come up by itself or by some accident for the accidental events are of a different nature. Where do they get the regularity? And, where that discipline? And, the regularity and the discipline too are such that there has been no change at all in them from the beginning of the world to this moment as the Qur'an says, "No change wilt thou find in Allah's way (of dealing). No turning off wilt thou find in Allah's way (of dealing)." (35:43).

'What I ask you to ponder over and contemplate on also includes Time, which has no beginning and no end. Although the immensity of Time is beyond the comprehension of man, yet on the basis of your estimates, which just as you make about the distances of heavenly bodies, is only of a limited period of a hundred thousand or two or four hundred thousand years. Now think about its immensity. For instance, suppose Time is a long straight line. What relation will your existence on this Time-line have with it, no matter how much you increase its natural limit by following the English system of medicine in which you have so much faith? It will perhaps be just what an inch, or even less, has with the circumference of the earth! This is all what a man's existence is. Then, he denies God and takes pride in his intellect which cannot be justified. Man commits a thousand and one silly mistakes but that he may deny the very existence of God surpasses all of them. It is regrettable and most unfortunate that intellect which has been given to man simply to know God through His creatures is used in such a way. Otherwise, even the animals too exist for a few days in this world. And, the interesting thing is that they need more food and water and have more needs but less of intellect but even then they prosper far more than man. They leave in the morning with empty stomachs but return well filled in the evening. In short, it is unfortunate that man uses his intellect to lead himself astray to the extent that he denies the existence of God. In fact, I am at a loss to

understand how a man can say that God is not there. Tell me one thing. Have you understood even your own self? What significance do you have compared to the thousands of worlds? Leave aside the thousands and thousands of worlds, and all the creatures in them. Take this world alone. From its beginning till now millions and millions of people like you, and better and far better than you, have been born on this earth. What was it that they did not accomplish here? Countless men have been born who ruled, held empires, acquired name and fame in their time. Then they were all gone as if they had never existed, leaving no trace behind. Tell me, are you unique? You were also not born by your will and I swear by God the Most Pure Who is the Master of both, you and me, and of all the living beings, you are not alive by your will, nor shall you die by your will. And, let us say not one month or two months but say fifty, hundred, or two hundred, or a thousand years after your death, nobody in the world will know that there had been someone known as Ibn-ul-Vaqt before them. My dear man, do ponder a little and then say whether God is also there or only you are there all in all.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt's response was: 'You unnecessarily made yourself a Deputy Collector. You should have been the prince of sermonisers. But please excuse me. Whatever you have just now told me are old tales. I have also heard of them. All of them show that it is ignorance that you have named God. When you are unable to know the cause, you start believing in God. For instance, when men see that they cannot bring rain, they say that God sent it. But suppose we are able to control water and bring rain whenever we wish it? We have already discovered that air is not uncompounded as the former philosophers thought, but it is composed of three kinds of gases—oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen. We also know now that air turns into water if hydrogen exceeds a certain limit. Thus, it won't be strange if one day we are in a position to bring rain. With the spread of modern sciences in Europe, it has been proved that man's power is not limited. Who can say that man who invented the railways and wireless and discovered a thousand other things will not do more in future?'

Hujjat-ul-Islam counter-argued: 'I present the facts and you talk of hypothetical things. True, man has very much increased his power but as they say, "You get the note by striking the string", one can well know the extent to which man can go. All his power consists in making use of only certain things, not all the things and that is all. For instance, take railways. What else is there in it except that God inspired someone to think that steam has great power. And then, people started applying their minds on how to utilise that power. And so by and by the railways were invented. Man put all his thinking faculties in making the railways but tell me, please, did he invent water, fire, steam, iron or wood, that is, any of the things which are used in making and running the railways? Or, did he create any of their properties? Remember, there is a great difference between discovering and creating. I remember a demonstration by one Mr Tresham in our school. He filled a transparent bottle with air. After some time, drops of water were formed in the bottle. This perhaps made you think that it would not be a surprise if man might be able to bring rain. You have always had faith in the Englishmen. You might have thought of that show as something great. But several times I wanted to say then, "What is strange about what you have done, Sir? Every day we see drops of water falling from the lid of the cooking pot." But this minor thing that man can somehow gather a certain quantity of hydrogen to turn into water, cannot entitle him to deny the existence of God or become indifferent to Him or make a claim to be God. And when man with all his intellect and wisdom cannot become God, nothing else, the moon and the sun and all the elements etc. has the ability to become God, because they do not have the intellect and will. They are merely helpless and devoid of intellect like dead stone. Prophet Abraham meant the same thing when he observed, "I love not those that set," about the moon, the sun and the stars.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'The fact is that no one has solved the mystery of the world. Everyone says what comes to his mind. So it's better not to boggle one's mind for nothing. Let the world

go on as it has been. I like this couplet of (the Persian lyric poet) Hafiz (d. 1389 A.D.) very much:

> Talk of the singer and of wine
> Do not seek the meaning of the mystery of the world
> As no one unravelled it by philosophy
> Nor will!'

Hujjat-ul-Islam replied, 'Now, firstly, the logic of the poets is not worthy enough to be taken as evidence to discuss matters of religion. And then, you interpret it in a way that suits you. I think the hidden secrets which the poet, Hafiz, advises not to pursue are those which God meant to keep hidden from man. For instance, as the Qur'an says, "Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with Allah (alone). It is He Who sends down rain, and He Who knows what is in the wombs. Nor does anyone know in what land he is to die. Verily with Allah is full knowledge and He is acquainted (with a'l things)." (31:34). Or, take your earlier argument in which you express your doubts. That is, if the ups and downs, joy and grief, or the changes in conditions is ordained fate in this world, then it is difficult to believe in God as The Wise and The Just and The Merciful. Or, like someone who wishes to find out the aims and objects of the creation of the world and starts to question every event and every existing thing as to why it is so. Or, for instance, someone who wishes to know what the soul is and what relation it has with the body, or the relation between cause and effect. There are a thousand other such things which are never going to be revealed to man in this life. Man need not pursue such things. Whatever is happening he should take as its being a favour of God and keep quiet. He should not criticise a thing which he cannot understand. He should accept his inability to understand. Besides this, you have the discretion not to entertain such thoughts in your mind. Or else, it will be like the midday sun shining in its full splendour but a bat cannot see it. Well, let it not. What does the sun lose?

> If a bat-eyed one cannot see by day
> How can the fountain of the sun be blamed for it?

'A bat cannot see the sun. That is the way it is. It cannot stop others from seeing it. Nor can it make the sun dark and black or stop it from rising as usual. But one day, the day of reckoning will come. You will be called upon to account for and you will be asked, "You had eyes, why did you not see? You had ears, why did you not hear? You had intellect, why did you not understand?" '

Ibn-ul-Vaqt replied, 'We have not yet concluded one discussion and you have started another, about the Doomsday and the Reckoning.'

'Don't call it a discussion,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam. 'I am very much against any contest and debate about religion. I had already told you that religious faith is not a thing to be achieved by argument and dispute. Faith is a medicine for a patient, comfort for the restless, wealth for a buyer, good tidings for the hopeful, deliverance for a sinner, that is, it is the kindness of God the Cherisher. Whatever I have said to you is not at all by way of discussion or debate. Only out of my love for you have I told you a way so that you may get rid of your anxiety by contemplation with a candid heart. And, if you object to my talking about Doomsday and Reckoning, know it that all these pains taken here are for that very day. Had there been no Doomsday and the Reckoning, why should one have bothered about faith and the pursuit of religion? The great difficulty is that there is no deliverance even after death. Life in this world is only for a short period. It will come to pass, this way or that. The long, long life will be that which will begin after death. It will be a new birth as though, and the betterment of that life is the main object of religion.'

'Well, now at least you have put forward an argument for the existence of God though I am not satisfied with it,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt. 'I still think that all people are accustomed to see the cause for everything. They see there is a cause for every thing. As such, they have generalised that every event must have a cause. When they do not find a cause, they at once convince themselves of the existence of God. But I would like to know what proof you have of Doomsday and the Reckoning?'

Hujjat-ul-Islam said, 'I can't understand what sort of proof you require. If you mean to say that you want to see God with your eyes or touch Him with your hands, then leave me aside, no one can claim to show God. But tell me one thing. Proof and evidence are the means of conviction. But does conviction depend only on our seeing the visible and tangible things? No, never. Everyone is convinced of his intuitions although intuitive things are neither visible nor tangible. As for your objection to the generalisation made by people, how can I believe that you really object to it when I see that you do not practise what you say?'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean to say that you criticise the people because they can see causes for so many happenings that they make the generalisation that there must be a cause for every event. In other words, you mean that this generalisation by the people is wrong. But I ask you one question. If a pencil is misplaced on your table, you will certainly think that somebody has disturbed your table and you will certainly be angry with your servants for their misplacing your things. This shows you also do the same thing as others do a thousand times everyday. Your getting angry with your servants is the result of the generalisation which is already impressed on your mind that nothing of an inorganic nature can move until a mover moves it. Or, for instance, you are convinced that one who is born a man shall die one day. But how many men have you yourself seen or heard dying? And, what authority have you to make a generalisation on your limited knowledge, however abundant and wide in itself it may be? All your criticism amounts to your saying that to make a generalisation is wrong in itself whereas the whole world agrees that it is one of the powers of the intellect and all the business of the world rests on it. If you ask the proof of Doomsday and Reckoning, I'll advise you, not only in this regard, but in all matters of theology that first you should develop the habit of contemplation on the affairs of the world. I cannot say how long it will take but God willing and if you are not hostile in your attitude, I hope you will soon develop something of a feeling of humility in your heart. It will

be proved to you that you are only like an insignificant particle in this huge workhouse and that your existence is more unstable than that of a dream or a thought. Then, I believe all your doubts will be removed and without your requiring any further proof as your inner heart will bear witness that God is undoubtedly the Creator of this world and of whatever exists in it; there is no limit or extent to His Power; no man has the capacity to define the limits to His Perfection and Excellence; He is our Master; He has every right on us and He may rule over us in any way He likes. Only now the talk of Doomsday and Reckoning and other matters of faith may seem distant to you but a little contemplation in this regard will remove this feeling of distance because religious faith is not a conglomeration of ludicrous misjoinders. All its doctrines and institutes are well knit together. It is not possible that a man has belief, truly so described, in God, and also questions the matters of faith. As the Qur'an says, "Were ye to know with certainty of mind, (ye would beware!)". (102:5). Well, we are Sayyids, the progeny of Prophet Muhammad, and Muslims. We believe in God and regard it as a pre-requisite of humanity. When we ponder over the affairs of the world, the existence of the Hereafter seems to be a must. Our heart has been so made that it distinguishes between good and bad. God knows how it is so impressed on our mind and we never forget that there is bound to be an outcome of all this (life), not in this world, but after death.'

'But such thoughts never occur to me,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'Do not occur to you or you don't let them come to your mind? ' asked Hujjat-ul-Islam. 'They must be occurring to you but you do not let them occupy your mind. As a matter of fact, the world itself is such a place where it can't be helped. Only with His grace and help one can overcome mundane affairs. The difference between this world and the next is that of cash and credit, between what is ready at hand and what is promised, between what is prompt and what is delayed, between what is present and what is absent, between the exterior and the interior, and between the illusory and the real. It is really not an easy task to sever one's relations with the world. But as they say, "if one

cannot get the whole of a thing one should not leave what one gets of it, but one should only put in one's efforts and hope for His favour and kindness."

'I have already told you that the basic principle of religion is to somehow create a sense of humility. You may understand this by supposing that man is sick and religious faith is moderation of temper (that is, state of sound health). Religious faith should be as valuable to us as sound health is to a man suffering from a fatal disease. One who knows his disease may sometimes treat himself but as they say, "the counsel of the weak is also weak", so people mostly go to a physician for treatment. He diagnoses the disease, finds out its causes by feeling the patient's pulse, getting his urine examined and listening to the description of the symptoms by the patient. After all this, he prescribes some medicines and tells the patient what to abstain from. And if God so wills, the patient recovers after following these explicit instructions. As far as faith is concerned, both of us are sick. The only difference is that you do not accept you are sick. Your disease has thus grown repulsive but you do not realise it. You did not at all care to get it treated. I know my disease but unfortunately I am not a physician. But as a chronic patient comes to know the properties of certain medicines, I can only say that what you require is a sense of humility. And, all the effects and belongings, pomp and show, and wealth and authority, that is, all the things which appertain to arrogance, amount to intemperance at its worst. As long as these exist, it is difficult, if not impossible, to develop the sense of humility. Contemplation, which I have suggested, is a remedy and I have gained much from it. My disease is not yet completely cured but it has been much reduced. I am also in search of a physician but he is not to be found. Do you understand what I mean by a "physician"? I mean a spiritual guide. Such men suggest a number of steps which can be taken to develop a sense of humility. Some of them suggest devotional exercises and physical exertions, some suggest travelling and some suggest contemplation and meditation. It entirely depends on the differences of personal dispositions of men as to which step would prove to be

more helpful to them. A trusted physician, that is, a spiritual guide, alone can determine it. Adversities are often said to be quick in effect in controlling the natural disposition of men. The Qur'an says, "He it is who enableth you to traverse through land and sea; so that ye even board ships—they sail with them with a favourable wind, and they rejoice thereat; then comes a stormy wind and the waves come to them from all sides, and they think they are being overwhelmed: they cry unto Allah, sincerely offering (their) duty unto Him, saying, 'If Thou deliver us from this, we shall truly show our gratitude!' But when He delivereth them, behold! they transgress insolently through the earth in defiance of right! O mankind! your insolence is against your souls—an enjoyment of the life of the Present: in the end, to Us is your return, and We shall show you the truth of all that ye did. The likeness of the life of the Present is as the rain We send down from the skies: by its mingling arises the produce of the earth—which provides food for men and animals: (it grows) till the earth is clad with its golden ornaments and is decked out (in beauty): the people to whom it belongs think they have all powers of disposal over it: there reaches it Our command by night or by day, and We make it like a harvest clean-mown, as if it had not flourished only the day before! Thus do We explain the Signs in detail for those who reflect." (10:22–24). O God, how so beautifully said! Only this much is sufficient to make one religious if one is not shameless, or does not turn a deaf ear, or feign ignorance. But as a poet says, who cares:

> Winds of carelessness are blowing around,
> Gathering shadows of sleep surround,
> Soundly do the sleepers sleep
> After taking a vow as though
> Not to get up before the Resurrection Day!

'In short, even adversity is a boon for a man of faith and that is why the great men of religion held adversity dear to them. Some hearts are soft by birth and are easily moved to see others in trouble. In the beginning the Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him, asked the people not to visit the graves in order to prevent

them from idol-worship. But later he said to them, "I asked you not to visit the graves but listen, go and visit them for it softens the heart." In times of droughts and epidemics and other heavenly or earthly calamities, for instance, severe cold or severe duststorms or excessive rains or hailstorms, etc., people turn to God. And there are some such holy men also who are moved to see even a moving Persian wheel as it reminds them of the revolutions of the world. "They get ecstatic to hear its sound." Well, you are a better judge of your self. Do follow whatever course you find most effective. A poet has aptly said:

> What is this world bereft of religious endeavour
> Will you do something for the Hereafter
> Or will you simply fret for Here?'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt answered: 'You wish to make me an ascetic, perhaps, although whatever you preached now is particularly against your religion, Islam. Death is certain but we see we can be happy even in this short span of life. There are very many things which make us happy and we also know what is happiness and what is grief. So, when we know what is happiness and the things that make us happy are also available to us, what other inference can there be except that we should enjoy this life as much as we can? And, if we kill ourselves by remaining hungry and naked like the ascetics for fear of death, it would mean that the world is absurd and meaningless. Can you imagine what this world would come to be if all the people thought the same way?'

'Well, I see that you are so engrossed in this mundane world that you are not at all interested in religion,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam. 'Had there been no facility for repentance, among the many other facilities provided in Islam, like Moses, peace be upon him, I would have advised you to atone for it by committing suicide. Perhaps, you do not remember the Chapter, *The Cow*, of the Qur'an, which says, "And remember Moses said to his people: 'O my people! Ye have indeed wronged yourselves by your worship of the calf: so turn (in repentance) to your Maker, and slay yourselves (the wrong-doers); that will be better for you in the sight of your Maker.' " (2:54). Tell me, what it is that makes

you think that I want to make you an ascetic? Is it because I advise you to ponder over the affairs of the world? Or, is it that I say that you should let God's Glory be impressed on your mind? Or, is it because I advise you to develop a sense of humility in yourself?'

'But can a man live happily in this world with such thoughts? If it is not asceticism, then what is it?' asked Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'If one has a sound perception and is right-minded, there will be no greater happiness than having faith. It is a mistake to regard the mortal, temporary, short-lived and unstable joys of the world as happiness. They are just like the pleasures of a boy wasting his time in sport and play, or of a gambler in gambling, or of an opium-eater in taking opium, or of an ignorant, sick man indulging in intemperance. The real and pure and immortal happiness was that for which the Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him, took so much pains that his feet became swollen as he stood saying his prayers the whole night. He never took to his fill even the loaf made of unsifted barley flour all his life. He always fastened a stone against his belly to suppress the pain of hunger. Often, the whole night no lamps were lit in the houses of the members of the Prophet's family. He wore the marks of the rough straw-mat made of palm leaves on his back and sides for he slept on this mat. And, in one of his *Hadīth* (Traditions) he clearly said, "the comfort of my eyes is in namāz," that is, "I feel happy only in saying my prayers." '

'Again, you have started to talk about the comforts and pleasures of the Hereafter,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt. 'My objection is that the thoughts of religion spoil the happiness of the world.'

'It is entirely wrong on your part to think so,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam. 'Both, the happiness and grief of the world, are often based on one's own perception. The more you value the world and its affairs, the more you are affected by the worldly happiness and grief. Religious faith which, in short, tells us that the world and its affairs are of little worth, does not spoil the joys of the world, but makes both of them worthless and insignificant in the eyes of man. I do not think any man in this world, even if he is the king of the whole world, can be happier

than the person who suppresses his anger, who does not take revenge, does not lie, does not indulge in backbiting, who is not greedy and avaricious, who is not cruel, who is not exacting, miserly and stingy, who is not proud and arrogant, who does not quarrel with others, who neither envies others nor feels jealous, who is grateful in prosperity and patient in adversity, who is of cheerful disposition, forbearing, enduring, affable, humble, able to do without, who has self-control, who is contented, generous, resigned to the will of God, and hopeful of the recompense in the Hereafter—in short, who is a man of faith. Such a man is himself happy and his relatives and friends too are happy with him. "God is pleased with them and they are pleased with God." A man given to the world may remain happy as long as he is able to get whatever he wishes. But tell me, has there been anyone from the beginning of the world to the present day who has been so fortunate? Or, can anyone be expected to get whatever he wants in future as long as the world exists? No, no one. Thus, we know that no one has ever got perfect happiness nor can it be ever possible. The other way of being happy is to restrain oneself, to control one's wishes, to reduce one's needs. And, this is the essence of the teachings of religion as far as it is concerned with the betterment of life.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'Well, there might be some people who lead a comfortable life because of their religiousness. To me religion in itself seems to be a mountain of adversity. There are hundreds of religions in the world and every religion has followers, has one wiser than the other, one more worshipful, one more virtuous, and one more truthful than the other. Then, there is so much malevolence among the men of religion that one doesn't want to see the other. Every one of them thinks that he alone is right while all others have gone astray. I do not know how you have satisfied yourself with religion? To me it seems every one blindly follows it. A Muslim is a Muslim because he has been born in a Muslim family.'

'Religiously speaking, everyone of us except those whom God wills, has a very bad condition,' said Hujjat-ul-Islam. 'Who is there who has not committed a sin? Our determination happens

to be so weak that we cannot but be caught in the net of sin. Just see, what power do we have to raise our heads against the worldly governments? But it is fun for us to make light of the governance of God, The True, The Omnipotent and The Ruler of both the worlds. In the words of a poet one can only say:

> Your generosity, O Lord, has made us impudent!

'In short, every one does a thousand unworthy things every day but the most unworthy of them is that one shows one's meanness in the name of religion. How can I blame others when I am myself the worst and the most worthless? But to me these religious debates are the most abominable. Maybe, my views are wrong. But I think all this wrangling is because of mutual perversity, self-exaltation, hyperbolic language and unwarranted bigotry. Well, as for myself, unfortunately I can give very little time to theology and I hardly have time to take account of myself. Then, I do not allow religious debates to come to my mind. If ever such thoughts occur to me I just put them off telling myself, in the words of a poet, that:

> Why bother about others
> First mend yourself!

'The same point has been made in the Qur'an which says, "O ye who believe! Guard your own souls: if you follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray. The goal of you all is to Allah: it is He that will show you the truth of all that ye do." (5:105). Thus, you save yourself from attacking others, as the saying goes "as one sows, so shall one reap". Let them mind their own business. I am nobody's censor, nor the custodian of religion, nor am I deputed to guide others. Why should I meddle in the affairs of others? "No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of others," says the Qur'an. (6:164). As far as defending my beliefs is concerned, they are sufficient to satisfy me. If others are not satisfied with them, let them not be! In short, I am unable to understand as to why there should be religious dispute among the people? What do they get out of it? If you take my word, never touch a book on scholasticism

even by mistake. The harm which such books may do to a seeker of religion is that he grows sceptical in matters of theology. It will be useful for you to keep in mind the order that I have suggested while thinking about these matters. It will save you from the astonishing disagreement between religions. I do not think any one will find himself inclined towards such issues if he is convinced that he is a mortal and an insignificant being and only God knows how he will fare after death. Some such issues he will avoid because he is busy in more important matters, and, in the words of a poet, may say to himself:

> Time is emergent or eternal
> What do we know?
> Why care? Whatever it may be
> We are among the mortals!
> Only this much we know!

'And, about some other issues he may think that if he does not understand them, it is because of a deficiency of his intellect. I have never made a proper study of any religion to be able to discuss or debate it.

'But I know about the religious beliefs of our country, viz., of Hindus, Christians, Parsis and Jews, though not in detail. The arguments which convince me of the existence of God, also convince me that He has no partner. We may thus leave out the Hindus and the Parsis at that. The Christians and the Jews are no doubt the People of the Book. Theirs and ours is the same faith. If there is any difference, it is in the Laws. But they too have confused the concept of the Unity of God. Thus, except for Islam, we have nowhere to go. The thing which attracts me most in Islam is that there is no exaggeration in it. The Prophet of Islam never claimed any piety or authority or privilege for himself which may have been beyond the capacity of a man. He clearly said, "I am but a man like you," (41:6), "nor do I know what will be done with me or with you" (46:9) and also "I have no power over any good or harm to myself except as Allah willeth. If I had the knowledge of the unseen, I should have multiplied all good, and no evil should have touched me."

(7:188). So, when the people asked him to show miracles, he flatly refused and said that it was not within his powers. As the Qur'an says, "Yet they say: 'Why are not Signs sent down to him from his Lord?' Say: 'The Signs are indeed with Allah.' " (29:50), and also "They say, 'We shall not believe in thee, until thou cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth, or (until) thou have a garden of date trees and vines, and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst, carrying abundant water, or thou cause the sky to fall in pieces, as thou sayest (will happen), against us, or thou bring Allah and the angels before (us) face to face; or thou have a house adorned with gold, or thou mount a ladder right into the skies. No, we shall not even believe in thy mounting until thou send down to us a book that we can read.' Say: 'Glory to my Lord! Am I aught but a man—a messenger?' " (17:90–93).

'Many people think that a Prophet must show miracles so that they may accept him as a Prophet. But I frankly tell you that miracles have no worth in my eyes. To me a Prophet is himself a great miracle. In the words of a poet, "The sun is its own evidence!" For instance, Yusuf's, (Joseph's) words "God forbid! Truly (thy husband) is my lord! he made my sojourn agreeable!" (The Qur'an: 12:23) move my heart to such an extent that I wouldn't have believed in him as much if he had raised a dead man before my eyes. Similarly, all the preachings of Islam are so easy to understand that they are naturally impressed on the mind. For instance, take repentance. It is so clear a thing that if we commit a fault or a mistake consciously or unconsciously, we cannot make good for it except by our showing regret and repentance. Now, if you compare repentance with the atonement of the Christians, you will realise its merit. Then, in Islam what an excellent thing it is that the trouble one has to take is no more than one can bear. Among other things, the Ten Commandments of the Jews and the teachings of Christianity say, "Don't store for tomorrow; Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also; Pray for your deadly enemy as you would pray for your only son." Instead of such impossible things to practise, Islam says, "Eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters. Say: Who

hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of Allah, which He hath produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He hath provided) for sustenance? Say: 'They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgement'," (7:31–32) and also "The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah: for (Allah) loveth not those who do wrong." (42:40).

'Now, you judge for yourself which of the two ways is practicable and which is impracticable. As I have repeatedly told you, discussion and debate I do not like. Otherwise I have contemplated on religion for many years. And even now I often do it. I have compiled a book for my children containing all those things on account of which I hold Islam as just, and the arguments that satisfied me. I will gladly give it to you if you wish. These debates cannot be settled in a few meetings. I do not claim to satisfy you or others. Satisfaction can never be had without the help of God, as the Qur'an says, "Those whom Allah (in His Plan) willeth to guide—He openeth their breast to Islam; those whom He willeth to leave straying—He maketh their breast close and constricted, as if they had to climb up to the skies." (6:125).

'I say it again that a seeker of religion in general and you in particular need not read any book nor need ask anyone. There are volumes and volumes on religion wherever you look in the world if you have your spiritual eyes open. You have all of it in yourself but you do not see it, as the Qur'an says, "(Our Signs are there) in your own selves: will you not then see?" (51:21). One thing more. If you are satisfied at heart with anything of religion, don't sit back simply because your anxiety is removed. The distinguishing mark of a perfect man is that his conviction is reflected in his words and deeds. There is not, and never will be, a single man of any religion or country in the world who is not convinced of death. But how many are there whose behaviour reflects this conviction? Huge mansions of bricks and mortar are built, gardens are laid, future contracts for a period

far exceeding the normal age of a man are made—durability is the criterion while purchasing the articles of daily use, even when we choose a pair of shoes! In short, there is no limit to expectations although everybody says:

What assurance is there of life?
Man is but a bubble!

'I cannot agree that submission by mere word of mouth but its refutation by deed is conviction. Yes, true conviction is similar to that of a passenger on a train who has to get down at a particular station. Firstly, he does not unnecessarily pull out and spread all his belongings but starts to collect the most needed ones, which he has taken out two or three stations before his destination. In the late hours of the night when he feels sleepy, he does not sleep. Though he knows that he has his ticket with him he checks and rechecks it and keeps it in his pocket so that there may be no difficulty when it is needed. The train has not yet slowed down but he holds his baggage in his hands and jumps over other passengers until he reaches the door. He clearly sees that all the doors are being opened but he is in a hurry and loudly says to the others, "I have also to get down here!" Can you imagine even a poor, miserable man leaving in time for, say, America, if he is told to do so, say, after today's evening prayers because everything of comfort is provided there for him? You know, the journey of death, after all, is of a different kind which no one is prepared to take today, or tomorrow, or after a year, or ten years hence.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'Only asceticism then, is the burden of all what you say. After every few words, the same refrain, as a poet says:

We stay put in the quarters of our beloved!'

Hujjat-ul-Islam said, 'Look here, I have not come to see you nor am I talking to you because you are a Deputy Collector. We have played and studied together. I am older than you, and my relation with you is also that of an elder. Don't take it ill. You are just foolish! Just try to understand. I have not said a thing

without reference to the Qur'an and if I have not referred to it, I may do it now. As far as religious faith is concerned the Prophet said, "Of all the times, mine is the best; then of those who come after me, and then of those who come after them." If the teachings of the Qur'an led to asceticism, the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his noble companions couldn't have established such a large and powerful Islamic empire within such a short time which had no precedence in the history of any land. And, the people of Islam were distinguished among the nations of the world not only by their empire but because they had also surpassed their contemporaries in all the arts and sciences of their time. Thus, had asceticism been the outcome of the teachings of the Qur'an, the great men of the faith would not have managed such a world so well and with so much decency and civility.'

To this Ibn-ul-Vaqt said, 'My dear sir, you may take it ill, or otherwise, I am unable to understand your double talk. On the one hand, you excite aversion to the world and on the other hand, you get irritated by the word "asceticism". Nobody can deny the worldly power and prestige of those whom you call the great men of faith. Their conquests of lands, their victories, their administration, their ambitions and their chivalry are well known over the whole world. One may presume anything on account of one's faith in them, but how can any other man be convinced of their kind of religiousness you preach to me unless its signs are manifestly marked in their outward conditions?'

Hujjat-ul-Islam replied, 'In their outward conditions also signs of such religiousness were present and present in abundance. In the context of happiness, by way of an example I have already spoken to you about the extent of the Prophet's continence. Almost the same was true of his companions. Have you grown so dull of understanding? Have you forgotten all your knowledge of history? In your student days everyone acknowledged your mastery over it. Just consider, who can excel them in continence who left their hearths and homes, their kith and kin, their country and all their belongings for the

companionship of the Prophet, and who were content to take only what others offered them as food and that too when it was an irregular supply? Who would excel them in continence when they were always prepared to lay their lives down with the Prophet? Not only that, living their lives in the way of God was a great victory for them. Who can excel those who placed all or half of their wealth before the Prophet without any hesitation when he told them about the requirements of the army, who in spite of being Commanders of the Faithful, themselves made bricks, who put on worn and patched clothes, who walked on foot or rode on mules even when there were occasions to display their pomp and circumstance? Who will excel them in continence who thought of others' needs before their own, who remained hungry to feed others, who borrowed to meet others' needs? You pretend ignorance, perhaps, otherwise you must have read thousands of such things in books of biography.'

'Well, this much I also understand that the only religion which one may adopt is Islam. Are you pleased now?' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

Hujjat-ul-Islam replied, 'The Qur'an says, "Say, 'Count not your Islam as a favour upon me;' nay, Allah has conferred a favour upon you that He has guided you to the Faith, if ye be true and sincere." (49:17).'

'Anyway, now let us talk about the worldly affairs. Tell me, how did you contact our Collector Sahib? What did you talk about?' asked Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'I have no time now for such absurd things. All this when we meet again.'

'I have to seek your advice in many matters.'

'I have told you in the next meeting!'

'When?'

'Let us see. God willing, within this week, when I get time.'

'Well, tell me at least what do you think about my meeting the Collector Sahib?'

'Oh no, don't think of it. God knows how it was that he was prepared for even for this much. I will, however, advise you that

this lifestyle which you have adopted is not helpful, neither to you nor to anyone else. Give it up. And, if you still want to suffer the punishment for it, it is your discretion!'

28 On Politics and Religion

As the Collector was reconciled, people started to visit Ibn-ul-Vaqt again. After Noble Sahib's departure, they had been reluctant to visit him as though he, his bungalow, court, staff and personal attendants were all quarantined. Now as the word spread that his work had been restored to him, some of them shamelessly came to see him that very evening. But Ibn-ul-Vaqt could not forget the shock so soon. Apart from this, he still remembered Hujjat-ul-Islam's words. But his anglomania had not been completely subdued. It had only grown a bit less intense. He met the people but not with much warmth. Even then, those who longed for his dinners and parties did not restrain themselves from their proposing to him to give a grand dinner in Mr Sharp's honour and invite all the Englishmen stationed there. Hujjat-ul-Islam would have seen him within a week as he had promised. But how could Ibn-ul-Vaqt have the patience to wait for him? And the people were urging him much for the dinner party. Hujjat-ul-Islam was a simple man with no formalities. He would have immediately come, had Ibn-ul-Vaqt just sent him a word. But Ibn-ul-Vaqt could not muster the courage to send for him, not because of the nature of his relation with him or because he was his elder. Actually, Hujjat's talks had exalted him much in Ibn-ul-Vaqt's eyes.

Thus, on the third day about half past seven at night he put on his old Indian dress and hurriedly rode off to his aunt's place. This was his first visit after he had changed his lifestyle. The members of his family, particularly his aunt (Ibn-ul-Vaqt's father's sister and Hujjat-ul-Islam's mother-in-law), were all delighted and fondly talked with him. Their talks were quite

interesting. But they do not concern us here. Ibn-ul-Vaqt said to Hujjat-ul-Islam, 'Well, sir, people are after me to give a dinner party in honour of the Collector.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam said, 'Look here, I may take you just now to him if you agree to come along in this Indian dress. You know, he had expressly told me that he did not like to see any Indian in the English dress. Why do you unnecessarily insist on this?'

'What sort of reconciliation is this, then?'

Hujjat-ul-Islam said angrily, 'If it's not, let it be so. Do whatever you like. What an ungrateful man you are! Your work is restored to you. As a matter of fact, the Collector has apologised because confession of a mistake is itself an apology. The dishonour which you suffered in the eyes of the people is completely washed off. Thus, as far as official relations with the Collector are concerned, it is all settled. As for his dislike for your English lifestyle, it is a personal matter. But it is not only his, but all the Englishmen think the same. Out of politeness one may not openly object but in one's heart one would certainly take offence.'

'I do not understand what right a Collector has or any European, be it even a viceroy, to meddle in matters of our dress and way of life? How is it justified? Today it is dress, tomorrow they may interfere in the religion of the subjects. This is entirely against the principles of the British Government. And, you will see that Mr Sharp will suffer humiliation in this regard.' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

Hujjat-ul-Islam responded: 'Well, if the Englishmen have a right to rule over this country, they have every right to prevent things which may lead to weaken their Government. And, the change in your dress and lifestyle are included in those things. After all, why should any Indian discard his familiar traditional lifestyle and adopt the English one? If it is not claiming equality with the rulers, what else is it? What does equality between the ruler and the ruled reflect except the weakness of the Government?'

'Thus, according to you freedom of the subjects which the

British Government so proudly claims, is only a fraud,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'Freedom of the subjects does not mean that the English should withdraw from governance, and no sane person would expect it from them.'

Ibn-ul-Vaqt argued: 'This is what the persons at the helm of affairs in India think. Those in England do not think so. They do not at all differentiate between the subjects of India and England. Perhaps, you think that it is the Englishmen here who may do whatever they like. Those times are gone now. Mr Sharp is disturbed over one man's change of lifestyle. He may have yet to face more of what he dislikes. The day is not far off when the Civil Services Examination will be held in India itself. There will be no more reservations for the Englishmen in the civil services, as there are now. The Viceroy's Council will have an equal number of Indians on it and no ordinance will be promulgated without reference to them. In short, Indians will participate in the administration of India just like the Englishmen there in England. When both of them have the same king there is no reason why the people of both the countries should not be equally treated.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam replied, 'Oh God, what shall I say about this madness of yours? Surely, you have taken some intoxicating grain. Know your limits, man. Had you shown the same ability as that of the English people, and proved yourself trustworthy of the Queen, only then could you have made such tall claims. First deserve, then desire. Do you realise your worthlessness? You have neither courage nor boldness, neither unity nor refinement and civility, neither truthfulness nor the spirit of quest for it. You have neither knowledge nor any desire to gain it, you have neither any skill nor business acumen or riches, neither the genius to invent nor industry. In short, to tell the truth, you have not even the capability to keep your house in order. And just see your ambitions. You want to rule over the country! Why just the Indians? I think that the climate of the whole of Asia has become so rotten that a governor or administrator, truly so described, is not to be born here. Do you know what I said when

I reached Bombay on my way back from the pilgrimage and heard all about the Mutiny? "Unnecessarily the Englishmen have taken so much trouble! When they had first seen that the people had revolted they should have given one district to them, if not more, for some time and told them 'If you are not happy with our administration, let us see how you yourself administer this district.' " I believe that even before a year the people would have tired themselves out of their maladministration, humbly submitted to the English and never thought of revolt.

'I think English rule has become essential, not only for you but for all of us. Just see, knife, scissors, thread and needle, matchbox, different varieties of cloth, in short, most of the things of daily use and of comfort are all of English make. I cannot visualise what will become of us if we are totally cut off from the English? These things apart, suppose there are many Bengalis or other English-educated Indians available even for the high post of a Governor, (Why talk of others when, may God preserve you from the evil eye, you yourself do not lack in anything!) but tell me, please, is there anyone who can produce or provide the necessities of life for us? It is a great contribution of English education that there are many people in our Bengal who can serve as Governors, Councillors, Lt. Governors, Members of the Boards, Commissioners, Collectors, Judges, Magistrates, etc. Let these peaceful conditions prevail for another ten or fifteen years and many more will come up here in this part of the country as well. But has there been anyone who can invent machines like the Englishmen or who can even assemble the different parts into a machine like them? If we have any sense of shame we would drown ourselves in a handful of water. Just think, the produce of our own country is sent abroad to be processed and manufactured and then sold to us at a price four or five times more than its original cost. India, you know, is the richest country in the world in minerals, vegetation, animals—in short, in all respects so to say, but we have no genius to utilise and make profit out of them. As such, it is immaterial to us if we have all these resources. We had lost everything except agriculture and trade. But the bountiful conditions of our

agriculture are also deteriorating day by day. Land is not allowed a respite. Therefore, its yielding power has grown less and less. But we do not know what it is that the land has lost and how this loss can be made up. So, how can we grow crops as rich as in the olden days? Take Delhi itself. The Rai Pithora Fort, which is more than two thousand years old, still stands in its suburbs. The ploughs and carts of those old days are carved on its stones. Long ago when I saw it for the first time, I had said to myself, "Oh God! So many révolutions the world has seen and so many governments have changed. Different communities have come and gone. In short, the whole world has changed but these ploughs and carts have not changed. They are still the same as they used to be in those days. Agriculture, you know, is so important an occupation. All of us live on food and millions of men are all the time engaged in it. Isn't it God's will, then, that nobody thought of bringing in any meaningful change in it? On the other hand, see the agriculturists there in Europe. In spite of the fact that there the climate and the soil are not favourable, they have made such huge progress in agriculture. With the best of our efforts here the yield per *bigha* (about five-eighths of an acre) is hardly ten *sers* (about twenty lbs) whereas it is one *maund* (about eighty lbs) there. They had realised how important agriculture is. So they wholeheartedly devoted themselves to it. With the application of their minds they brought the whole production under their control. They invented hundreds of machines to be used in agriculture which saved their time and manual labour with the result that production was doubled and redoubled, nay, it came to be a thousand times more and of improved quality. Leave aside other things, the variety of produce and the animal breeds have also been changed.

'The other means of living is trade and commerce. The truth is that the marrow is eaten up by the Europeans and the dry bones are left to be sucked by some business communities of India like the Memons, the Bohras, the Punjabis, the Marvaris, or by you and me if we so wish. As far as the sense of earning a living is concerned, our countrymen as compared with the Europeans are as slow and as unskilled as a *bhil*, an aboriginal, or

any other uncivilised wild man. This is the main distinguishing feature between us and the Europeans. Besides this, we are not of the same race, we are not their co-religionists or compatriots. They have subjugated us by the sword just as our ancestors had established their rule over the Hindus. The English people can never be satisfied with us, and caution too demands it and as the saying goes, "caution is another name of mistrust!"

'Once you made tall claims of your knowledge of history. Just think of it, how much did we trust the Hindus? It was after the rule of several hundred years and that too only when unfortunately our ancestors settled down here and made themselves as ease-loving and lazy and superstitious as the Hindus by their association with them. Thus at last they lost their empire. Only after many hundred years of rule, did the Hindus have any access to the darbār of the Muslim kings and were appointed on highly responsible posts. How much time has passed since the English assumed power here? Whatever little trust had been established was brought to nought by the unfortunate Mutiny of 1857. Now at least a hundred years of peace are required to show any good results. But lo and behold, one revolt has just been subdued and you have already started to talk about a second one!'

'Excellent, one charge has not yet been proved, and you lay another charge against me!' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt. 'You think even the demand for our rights is revolt. Thank God, you are not the Head of the Investigation Department like me.'

'Has a vanquished nation any rights?'

'Why not? It's another thing if an uncivilised and cruel government does not accept them but the British Government is civilised and just. That is why every demand is made on it.'

'Well, if you claim any right, who will decide it?'

'The Government itself. And, it is on account of its justice alone that all these contentions are made.'

'That's it, and that is what I say. If you really trust in the justice of the Government and hold it just and fair, then you should have complete trust in it. A just government cannot ignore the needs and requirements of its subjects. All the officials

of the Government from the Governor-General to the Assistant according to their status and rank always work for the happiness and welfare of the subject people,' argued Hujjat-ul-Islam.

'So? If we put our needs before it, what wrong have we done? Is it helping the Government or revolting against it?'

'But is this the way to present your needs? Just see the vernacular papers of Bengal. Then you will realise whether it is just placing one's needs before the Government or condemning it in an uncivilised, uncultured manner like the abusive lowly women of an inn. Listen, it is clear that if you want to have the same rights as those of the subjects in England, then understand that this is impossible. Neither are we the subjects like them nor can we have the same rights. Firstly, we must not demand any rights. We should make such demands only when we think that the Government is ignorant or unjust. If, as they say "a needy man is a crazy man," and you are so impatient, know it then that obedience like that of a son brings a reward; assuming oneself to be a father does not help. True that the English officials are not themselves the Government and only Government servants, but the Government sees through their eyes and hears through their ears. Any suspicion on their part against us is very harmful to us. People in their wisdom work in the interest of the country but in my opinion it is like their laying stumbling blocks against a moving train. As is aptly said:

> Pearls are for those who ask not,
> And not the alms for those who ask!

'Whatever I think of, Fate confronts me. Some of us who are qualified after receiving education based on the modern exigencies of life, and they are very few in number, mar themselves because as soon as they leave the college they run after jobs. And the position of jobs is: "one post, a hundred candidates"; those who do not get a job are displeased with the Government and disgruntled. They go on grumbling and talking nonsense. They become a curse to themselves, to the society, and to the Government. If they have the grace of God bestowed on them they should not hanker after Government service after the

completion of their education. Instead of suffering indignities as candidates for Government jobs they should keep their trust in God and seek other means of living. Many new avenues will thus open up for them and the existing ones will flourish all the more by utilising their talents. One may say whatever one likes, one may assume oneself to be a reformer, or claim to aspire for the national welfare or make a pretext of patriotism but as a matter of fact every one of them has service as his ambition. Now suppose as they say, "give a mouthful to a barking dog to stop it", even if the Government throws open the doors of service to stop this din and cry, what will be the outcome except that a thousand or two, or even ten thousand men will find a means of living? But will this precious little guarantee the country's welfare? God forbid, it will be like "a caraway seed in a camel's mouth" as they say. If you really wish well for the nation you must stop unnecessarily going after the Government! Why don't you set the nation on the right path? The huge wealth of the whole world, which, like the proverbial Deluge of Noah's times, is raining and gushing forth out of the bosom of the earth in Europe today, has nothing to do with the hankering after service and not even with the kingdom. May God protect them from the evil eye, there are thousands and thousands of businessmen who do not give any importance even to the middling kingdoms. Just think, for instance, about the laying of rail-tracks in our country. There is perhaps no kingdom in the whole world which can bear such a huge expenditure, whereas it is a trifling thing for the people of England. Thus, if you really aim at the well-being and progress of the country, see to it that it is not in the way you or the educated people are going. As a poet says, "the path thou treadest leads to Turkestan (and not to the Ka'ba of your destination!)". The only way, I think, is that first you should bring a change in the people's way of thinking. They should understand that our land is a land of gold but none of us knows the formula of alchemy which may enable us to convert dust into gold. God has revealed that formula to the people of Europe. Let us learn it from them and turn all our mountains—the Himalayas, Vindhyachal and Aravalli and the

Ghats into gold. We are also created by God like the Europeans. We should also take to the ways they have taken to. We should follow them and make ourselves strong. Why should we depend on the Government? Why should we curry favour with it? Why should we take our problems to the Government officials? We can also do everything if we want to. The people of Europe are not the only ones entitled to the favour of God and the bounties of the earth. The fact is that we do not want to do anything except find faults with the Government, and fortunately the Government is so tolerant that it ignores all our accusations. It is just like a mountain standing firm against the strong winds. Think of the 1857 Mutiny. Was it an ordinary affair? But as they say "the great ones have great souls." At first, as a matter of political expediency, they crushed the mutineers and when they realised that the revolt had been rooted out, they declared peace for all. May it be rewarded by God! In the words of a poet one may say:

> Verily it was becoming you
> The brave ones do the same
> All praise for your forgiving
> And for your revenge!

'Whatever I see, whether it is education, transport and communications, rules and regulations, or police or so many other things, the English Government seems to be a blessing of God in every way. And, ever since I have witnessed the poor state of administration in Persia and Turkey, I confess that I regard the English rule in India to have made it virtually a paradise on earth. Turkey and Persia are far off. Just go to a place under the jurisdiction of a Muslim nawab or of a Hindu raja, then you will truly realise the value of peace and security although even in these native states whatever peace you find is the outcome of the vigil and patronage of the English Government. I do not mean that there are no shortcomings in the English administration. They must be there because the English too are human beings, and as the saying goes "no breath of man is free from aberration." And then, to look after the affairs of a state, and

that too of India, is indeed a very difficult and serious task. Just see the vastness of the country. And then, realise the fact how many people of different tempers, different faiths, and in different conditions live in this country. They have to deal with all these people who are complete strangers to them. Is it surprising then if there are several short-comings in administration? But I understand that the present rulers have good intentions. They are always engaged in planning for the betterment of the subjects. If we goad the moving oxen, it means we want to be kicked by them.'

'It means that you have proved all my plans wrong!' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'Have I? Or, were they already wrong? I know well that your intentions were not bad. You thought, and rightly so, that anyone bestowed with a little common sense will also see that although we Muslims are not given any particular consideration under the British Government (it is quite another thing whether we deserve it or not), it is also true that the Government is in no way adamant or hostile to us. We are just like the other subjects. But among Muslims, indigence, poverty and destitution are on the increase day by day. Again, you thought, and rightly so, that most of the Muslims, in fact all of them belonged to the salaried class. This is not a new situation. It was the same even when they were the rulers. Now the other communities have dislodged them even from the services, except in a few cases. You tried to find out the cause and came to the right conclusion that the Government has been making the knowledge of English an essential qualification for service. You also saw that Muslims have no reason to be discriminated against on account of religion because they are also the People of the Book and the Qur'an explicitly allows commensality and marriage with them. "The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time—when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues," says the Qur'an.(5:5). But the problem is that

the English are total strangers here and the Indian Muslims never cultivated any contacts with them. They have also grown somewhat superstitious as a result of their association with the Hindus for generation after generation. In short, partly due to some estrangement and partly due to some superstitiousness they keep away from taking to the English dress, English manners, that is, from all the things English, even from the English language. Service was the only door open to them as a means of living and now, that too has been made narrow for them. Only to this extent I agree with you. But every step of yours beyond this is wrong. Firstly, you thought that service would bring prosperity to the Muslims. You should first realise that all the Government work is done most economically and frugally. If one rupee is to be spent on something, the Government wants to spend only half a rupee on it and that too very carefully. With the obvious result that there are few jobs and small salaries. Still, the whole world hankers after Government jobs. The traders, grain merchants, the tinkers, the coppersmiths, the vegetable sellers, the bakers, the menial servants of the English, even the grooms and the grass-cutters who had not a single literate person for the past seventy generations have now started going to schools only to be able to get Government jobs. As such, what good will come out of the jobs? Secondly, you were mistaken to presume that the English lifestyle will bring in a rapprochement between the Muslims and the English. Many people followed you and though this is what you wished for but it turned out to be something different. Apart from your disgrace among the Indians, the English were also annoyed. As a proverb says, "You wished to be exempted from saying the regular prayers but you were obliged to observe fasts as well." One door was closed on you and the other you could not reach. These are some of the worldly damages which are the results of your erratic plans.

'Now, as far as religion is concerned, the way you and your followers made a mockery of it was worse than what the proverb says, 'You may play as you wish, but will you play even with your papa's beard?' Each and every boy who has no interest in religion, who has no aptitude and regard for it, who is not in a

position to judge the matters of religion, nor even mature enough to understand them, who is just an ignoramus with no knowledge of religion, who is not a seeker of religion, who is conceited, and who just wants to be called a renovator of faith and a reformer of Islam, has started passing judgements on its doctrines. No doubt, all the people are prone to negligence in matters of religion, but those who have really any regard for it feel ashamed of their negligence and confess their guilt. As a poet says:

> Better is the man who regrets his guilt before God
> Otherwise no one can possibly adore Him
> As much as He deserves!

'But these days people have so turned away from religion that they have the audacity to be negligent in religious matters. It is as though they are committing a theft and taking pride in it. However, they not only do it themselves but in assuming themselves to be the nation's well-wishers and reformers they mislead others also. They do not realise that when a nation loses its religion, its style and dress, its way of living, its science, its language, it loses its national distinction as well. Whose reform then, and for whom these good wishes? If we wish to repair a house, it does not mean that we should raze it to the ground and build a new house instead. In the same way, reform of Muslims will be called a reform only when they remain Muslims, that is, they follow the religion of their ancestors, and when they are distinguished as Muslims even at a distance by their very appearance. And then, they should be stirred to yearn for progress in the light of the modern exigencies of life.'

'Then, what other plan do you suggest for it?' asked Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'The plan is revealing itself; as they say, "Time is the best teacher." Muslims have no more fear as they had earlier.'

'But all this is the result of our efforts,' said Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'Well, you may think so but if on the one hand you removed fear from amongst the Muslims, on the other hand, you made them irreligious. What sort of perverseness is this? You wish to

be praised for removing the fear, but you don't want to carry the blame of their irreligiousness! It is just as the saying goes, "sweet you gobble up and bitter you spit." '

'My dear sir, gone are the days when people believed in the idle religious tales. These are the days of reason. You will also not deny that the youth of today easily outwit the old and it is difficult for religion to hold itself against reason. You know that all the Greek philosophers who were recognised for their wisdom were all irreligious. Likewise, there may be hardly five per cent of the people in Europe today who sincerely believe in religion,' argued Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

Hujjat-ul-Islam counter-argued: 'This I do not accept. I think the people who believe in religion in every age and country are more than those who do not. As far as I know, it is verily true even of the world today. You might have been under a wrong impression because of the prominence of irreligious men. Such men become prominent not because of their number but only because they adopt a peculiar way and become conspicuous and earn the reproof of others. Then only you will appreciate and respect their wisdom. I do not consider them any wiser than the proverbial clever crow. It is not necessary that one who is worldlywise has also a sound understanding of the matters of religion. Different pursuits require different aptitudes. One may be very good at chess but may not be able to solve an easy problem of mathematics. Intellect in itself is laudable only to the extent that it is balanced. As they say, "Works done with moderation are the best." Otherwise its excess is a frivolity and relinquishing it is a folly, and both are to be despised. And the same is true of all the attainments, rather of all the gifts and bounties to be bestowed by God. According to a poet:

> God in His grace confers favours on you;
> When your ungratefulness grows
> He brings disgrace on you!

'Suppose people who do not believe in religion are extremely wise, it does not necessarily follow that we should not use our own intellect which is the moving spirit of all activity, and not

apply our mind. In our last meeting I had explained to you in detail how far reason may be applied in matters of religion but perhaps you have forgotten it. Or else, perhaps you want to tease me. If so, there are other matters to be talked about in a lighter vein but I do not like religion to be ridiculed or scoffed at.'

'Perhaps, you have taken offence at my words?' asked Ibn-ul-Vaqt.

'If you really care to discuss these matters seriously as a search for truth, I will be too glad to listen to your objections and satisfy you as much as I can. But talking about it when you have a hostile attitude is of no use. You are not a child and religion is not a medicine which may be forced down your throat by throwing you on your back. Have a true craving for it in your heart. Only then start discussing religion with others. Perhaps you may remember I already told you that thinking and meditation make one feel a compelling inner urge to believe in religion.'

'I may assure you this that I had never thought of ridiculing religion.' Ibn-ul-Vaqt said. 'But if you find anything hostile in what I have said, please forgive me for that. I have had no opportunity to think and meditate but I shall try. A day or two ago I just tried to think about it and it came to my mind that if religion is unavoidable and suppose all religions are false except Islam, then how many Muslims are there in the world and how many of them are Muslims in the true sense of the word? Reason never allows us to accept that only a few men are to be approved of and the multitude of them are to be rejected.'

Hujjat-ul-Islam said, 'At the outset you have landed yourself in the domain of Godship. First solve the mystery of the world, only then apply your mind on the mystery of the Hereafter. This is also one of those mysteries which human reason is helpless to understand. If you really wish to seek religion, why don't you follow the straight path? The existence of the world and the whole scheme of things here strongly suggests that there must be someone who is its Creator and Maker. If we ponder a little over all that exists in the world, we find that man is the crown of creation because he has the power of reason and

comprehension which is not shared by anyone. But in spite of all this, he is helpless and insignificant. With the result that we can neither see God the Great nor can we fully comprehend His Person and Attributes with all the power of our intellect. But as we know the Creator by His creatures, similarly, we also gather from all these creatures that One who has made and created them is verily endued with all the Perfect Attributes. This, in short, is the essence of religion, and all other things are its ramifications and complimentaries. Let me explain it to you. Divide religion in two parts: first the spirit of Islam; and then, out of all the sects of Islam one particular sect whose beliefs you may like. Whatever I have said about religion before you, may satisfy you about the first part, viz., the spirit of Islam, with the condition that you really want to be satisfied. And, when the true and real goodness of Islam is thoroughly ingrained in your mind, which shows itself in (good) deeds being spontaneously performed, then, take it from me, the English lifestyle itself will seem to be a burden to you on account of the demands of religion. As far as the second part, that is, choosing a particular sect out of all the sects is concerned, let it be postponed for some other time.'

Select Glossary

Ahl-e-Hadīth	the followers of the Traditions of Prophet Muhammad
Ahl-e-Kitāb	people whose religion is based on a Revealed Book
Ānna	sixteenth part of a rupee
Ātmā	soul
Avesī	the followers of Aves Qarnī, a great Muslim saint (d. 658 A.D.)
Āyāh	a native Indian waiting-maid
Ayyām-e-baiz	the middle of the lunar months when the moon is the brightest
Bābū	a clerk or writer in an office
Bhīl	name of an aboriginal tribe of India
Bīgha	about five-eighths of an acre
Biryānī	a dish of meat and rice
Dalā'il-ul-khairāt	a devotional exercise
Damrī	a nominal coin
Dāk bangla	a rest house for Government officers
Dāk gārī	a carriage for carrying mail
Darbār	court
Dhotī	long cloth
Diwān-e-Ām	hall of public audience
Farz	compulsory prayers
Fatwā	a verdict of the Muhammadan Law officer of a court according to *Shar'*
Firangī	a generic term to include almost all the Europeans
Firnī	a dish of ground rice, milk and sugar
Ghee	clarified butter

Gur	raw sugar
Hadīth	Traditions of Prophet Muhammad
Hanafites	the followers of one of the four chiefs of the principal sects of Muslims, Nu'mān bin Sābit known as Abū Hanīfa (d. 767 A.D.)
Havelī	a large house
Hijra	see page 102
Hizb-ul-bahr	a sixtieth part of the Qur'an
Huqqa	water pipe for smoking tobacco
Imām	one who leads the prayers
Ishrāq	supernumerary prayers after the sunrise
Istisqā	public prayers for rains
Jihād	holy war
Jogī	an ascetic
Ka'ba	the square temple of God in Mecca. Also see p. 10
Kabāb	roast meat or mutton cutlet with spices
Kachālū	spiced pieces of guava or any other fruit with sugar used as salad
Kāfir	unbeliever
Kāns	see p. 86
Katra	a piece of land which is enclosed and peopled
Kaurīs	small shells used as smallest coins
Kāyasth	a caste of Hindus
Khānd	coarse sugar
Khānqāh	the seat of a Muslim saint and of spiritual guidance
Khas	scented grass
Khichrī	a dish made of rice and split pulse
Khizr	the mystical guide, the prophet-saint who discovered and drank of the water of life whereby he became immortal. He is believed to help those who are in distress or have lost their way
Kos	a measure of length about two English miles
Kotwāl	city police chief

Lālā — a Hindu

Loo — hot wind

Luqmān — name of a famous Eastern fabulist supposed to be the same as Aesop

Madrasa — school; college; academy

Manzil-e-Fil — a devotional exercise

Maulvī — a Muslim divine

Maund — about 80 lbs

Memsahib — madam

Mohalla — a quarter of a city

Moong — a kind of pulse

Muftī — a muslim jurist or law officer

Muharram — see p. 84

Mujāhidīn — the holy warriors

Muqallid — see p. 110 f.n.

Mushrik — a believer in the plurality of Gods

Mustahabb — desirable prayers

Mutanjan — a dish of meat boiled in rice, with spices and sugar

Nafl — voluntary prayers

Namāz — regular prayers

Nān khatā'ī — sweetmeat pieces

Nawāb — a Muslim head of a princely state

Pālkī — a kind of sedan; see p. 131

Panchāyat — see p. 99

Parāntha — see p. 175

Phool — a ceremony performed by Muslims in honour of a diseased person on the third day after his death, when a portion of the Qur'an is recited, and flowers are placed on trays in the midst of the assembly

Pulā'o — a dish made of rice, boiled in meat soup

Qādrī — the followers of Shaikh Abdul Qādir Jīlanī, a great Muslim saint (d. 1166 A.D.)

Qalmī bare — a kind of pastry made of pulse and cut into long strips

Qibla	see p. 10
Rāja	a Hindu head of a princely state
Rak'at	standing for the recitation of a portion of the Qur'an, bowing of the head and body, and prostrating
Ramazān	the month of fasts
Sadr-us-Sudoor	Chief Judge
Salāt-ul-tasbīh	prayers extolling the perfection of God by saying *Subhana'l-lah* (praise be to God)
Samāj	sect
Samosa	a triangular-shaped pastry of minced meat or vegetable wrapped in the paste of fine flour and fried
Sanyāsī	an ascetic
Shar'/Shari'at	the divine law
Ser	about 20 lbs
Shāfe'ites	the followers of one of the chiefs of the principal sects of Muslims, Abū 'Abdullah Muhammad bin Idrīs known as Imām Shāfe'ī (820 A.D.)
Shāmī kabāb	meat cutlet
Shī'a	the follower of Ali, the son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad
Sivayyān	vermicelli
Sūfi	a Muslim mystic
Sunnīs	the orthodox Muslims who receive the *sunnat* or traditionary portion of Muhammadan Law
Surahs	chapters of the Qur'an
Ta'alluqadār	a big landlord
Tahajjud	supernumerary prayers at midnight
Tahayyat-ul-masjid	prayers in salutation to a mosque
Takbīr-e-tahrīma	words magnifying God at the commencement of all the five compulsory prayers
Takya	abode of a dervish
Taqāvī	loans to cultivators for implements etc.
Taqdīr	Fate; see p. 194

Tavā an iron flat pan

Ta'ziya see p. 84

Tehsīldār sub-collector of revenue

Thānedār keeper of a police station

Tilangā an inhabitant of Tilangana where the first soldiers were clothed and disciplined in the European manner, hence a soldier

Tughrā a decorative style of calligraphy

Vahī the Divine Revelation

Vilāyatī a generic term for foreigners—European, English, Persian

Wahābīs the followers of Shaikh Ibn Abdul Wahhāb, an Arab Muslim reformer (d. 1787 A.D.)

Zamīndār land-holder

Zarda a sweet dish made of rice, raisins and almonds cooked with cloves and coloured with saffron

Other Titles in the Series

Pratibha Ray: *The Primal Land*
Translated from the Oriya *Adibhumi* by Bikram K. Das.

Soma Muduli, the patriarch and Soma Sisa, the rebel, both lie dead on the mountain: but with the dawn comes hope of a new beginning, as the infant Soma is born. Can the tribe survive?

The Primal Land (translated from the Oriya original, *Adibhumi*) is the saga of the embattled Bonda tribe, which has roamed free among the mountains of Koraput (Orissa) since time began, but now faces extinction.

Subhodh Ghosh: *Shock Therapy*
Translated from the Bengali.

Subodh Ghose's stories are marked by a strong, vigorous narrative style and a lively universe of people and places drawn from the writer's formidable range of life experiences.

This collection of translations into English presents a number of his better-known stories. Romantic lovers, desperate peasants, eccentrics, conmen and patriots, persons with strong convictions or strange obsessions: all act out their lives in settings rural and urban, making the reader a witness to several segments of reality in a vividly evoked world.

Bani Basu: *The Enemy Within*
Translated from the Bengali *Antarghat* by Jayanti Datta.

This translation from the Bangla *Antarghat* is the story of a group of young friends who had committed themselves idealistically and politically to the Naxalite movement that rocked Bengal in the 1960s. Many years later, they still carry the scars beneath their lives of surface calm. But they also share the secret of a betrayal, one that was fatally injurious to some. Into this fragile, obscure universe arrives their betrayer, ironically seeking anonymity. Jagged wounds reopen and death follows. Is it suicide or murder, expiation or vengeance?

Manjul Bhagat: *Anaro and Other Stories*
Translated from the Hindi by the author.

Translated from the Hindi by the author herself, here are stories of women, men and children—all wrestling with life, not from positions of strength, but nevertheless holding on to their dreams.

From the unforgettable, feisty portrait of Anaro who refuses to be cowed down even in the face of unending drudgery or Taiji who is condemned as 'kabaad' by her family, but finds solace in her affection for Mangto, the kabadiwallah, to the

tender tale of friendship between Bebeji and the tandoorwala—they all bear the perceptiveness, compassion and ingenuity of a gifted storyteller.

Rajam Krishnan: *When the Kurinji Blooms*
Translated from the Tamil *Kurinjithen* by Uma Narayanan and Prema Seetharam.

Translated from the Tamil *Kurinjithen*, Rajam Krishnan's lyrical, erudite novel is a family saga of three generations of Badagas in the Nilgiris. As the winds of social change and modernity invade their protected lives, the innocence and harmony is replaced by conflict and tragedy that precede a new beginning.

Mannu Bhandari: *The Great Feast*
Translated from the Hindi *Mahabhoj* by Ruth Vanita

A bold exposé of the contemporary Indian political scene that has cast aside morality and ethics and unfailingly betrays public trust for vested interests and private ends.

The novel opens with the death of Bisesa—an unknown village youth—in itself an insignificant event. But with an important by-election around the corner, the feasting begins as opposing political parties like vultures seize upon the unfortunate event to extract political capital out of it, thereby providing sharp insights into the exercise of power and patronage.

Ashokamitran: *Sand and Other Stories*
Translated from the Tamil by N. Kalyan Raman and Gomati Narayanan.

Written with the deepest empathy for women trapped by an almost absolute lack of resources—financial, intellectual, emotional—these stories by Ashokamitran have all the identifiable characteristics of his writing—irony, interiority, sensitivity.

The narrative in all three novellas—*Sand, Malati, Those Two*—moves in a series of short scenes, building tension with a relentless layering of detail. The exploitation of the women (Sarojini, her mother, Malati, Vaala, Dharam) and their daily struggle against it lies exposed in all its terrifying ordinariness.

Malayatoor Ramakrishnan: *Roots*
Translated from the Malayalam *Verukal* by V. Abdulla.

Increasingly possessed by a yearning to escape the ennui of an indifferent marriage and the empty but comfortable lifestyle of a bureaucrat, Raghu decides to visit the small patch of ancestral property in his native village.

As he relives the past, old grudges are aired exposing the faultlines in relationships but also subliminally forging bonds with the land and his people.

The novel moves between the two worlds—the past and present—with pungent, earthy humour and sharp insights. The narrator's voice as he recounts the sights of his land and his experiences is powerful, sensuous and direct and moves inexorably to the apocalyptic moment when he finds his roots.

LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

In the charged atmosphere of the Mutiny (1857), an English officer, Noble Sahib, and a Muslim gentleman, Ibn-ul-Vaqt, are brought together under remarkable circumstances. Both of them are men of high principle and sharp intellect, on the common grounds of which they forge a lasting bond. Noble Sahib persuades Ibn-ul-Vaqt to remove the estrangement between the English and his community by adopting the English lifestyle and thus, draw his tradition-bound compatriots to a more progressive way of life. The consequences that follow are not what they had envisioned.

A profound and poignant narrative, and although a period-piece, it takes us along to be a witness to the perpetual confrontation between individual conscience and religion with its metaphysical concepts against the backdrop of the changing realities of the mundane world.

Cover painting: Hide and Seek by Ukil Ranada
Courtesy National Gallery of Modern Art
Series Cover design: Susetta Bozzi

www.south
asiabooks.com

Orient Longman

www.orientlongman.

ISBN 81-250-225